

THE LORD of LABRAZ

Pío Baroja



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THE LORD OF
LABRAZ

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PIO BAROJA



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THE LORD OF LABRAZ

BY PIO BAROJA

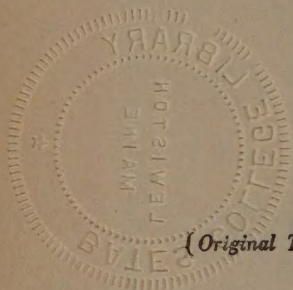


Translated from the Spanish by
AUBREY F. G. BELL



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(*Original Title:* EL MAYORAZCO DE LABRAZ)

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PREFACE

On one side the circling river
And on one the watch-tower tall:
On the third are fourteen turrets
On the fourth the city-wall.

—*Ballad of Labraz.*

ONE August afternoon I went to visit Labraz, a town of Old Cantabria. I had been told that it was a decayed and dying city, and my spirit, which was at that time depressed by the bitter gloom left on it by the disillusion of romantic dreams, was anxious to refresh itself in the extreme desolation of a town half dead. The city appeared in the distance, with its houses grouped on the side of a hill, standing out yellow against the sky with a humble melancholy air; a few tall dark towers stood among the brown mass of the warped and moss-grown roofs.

I approached Labraz by an exceedingly steep road, full of stones, which after ascending the hill, then passed round the walled enclosure of the town, the remains of bulwarks still standing, the ancient ruined fortifications which followed the irregularity of the hilly ground, rising and descending with the rocks and ravines that sur-

rounded the city. From the scarp of the moat to the palisade gleamed a carpet of dark-green grass. I crossed a stone bridge over a dry river-bed. On its left bank, above a talus, a barbican, turning to the left, supported a steep path which ended in a dark gateway, with a draw-bridge, by which one penetrated to the interior of the town. At the end of this bridge was the gate of the town: it was made of a single piece of wood, now worm-eaten, and was raised and lowered between two grooves; it was strengthened with great nails and had an enormous lock. The doorway ended in a narrow path full of embrasures in the walls, and this opened on to a square paved with slabs, in the cracks of which grew some languid weeds. In the middle of the pathway was another wooden door.

Labraz was a terrible town, a town of the Middle Ages. It had not a single level street, and the houses all had stone escutcheons. Nearly all of them were austere and silent; many were almost or completely in ruins. In a doorway here and there sat an old woman half asleep; a beggar passed feeling his way with his white staff, and starved dogs ran along the gutter. There were four or five ruined churches; some of them had been turned into haylofts. I paused sometimes to consider houses of solid stone with pointed arches; in others the first floor protruded irrepressibly, supported by corbels carved at the end of the beams on a line with the ceiling of the

ground floor; others had wrought-iron window-screens and double *ajimez* windows, with mouldings along the doors and balconies. The town had a large square, the Plaza Mayor, at one side of which stood the Town Hall, a fine palace in the Plateresque style, with six broad balconies, an upper story and a round escutcheon over the entrance arch. In the middle of the square was a fountain, with its tank. The houses of the square were supported on arcades, which were raised two or three feet above the level of the square itself. In the depths of the arcades were one or two small shops, mercers with piles of cloth and shawls; saddlers' shops; wax-chandlers in whose windows were set in admirable order votive offerings, carved candles, ornaments made of sugar and starch, and sweets which had become fossilized and had lost their colour. From the Plaza Mayor two cobbled streets went up to another square, on one side of which stood an ancient church, on another the high walls of a convent, on a third an old ancestral house. By the churchyard was a terrace with acacias and stone benches and a balcony from which one looked down on the town. From here Labraz appeared clustered round a large tower, a dark heap of roofs with their white chimneys and half-ruined houses. The country round it was of calcareous soil, and beyond was an extensive view of treeless mountains and bare hill-sides, red and white, undulating like the waves of the sea in endless succession. Close to the town were gardens, and along the

river lines of poplars, which sometimes grew more thickly, forming little green woods. Above the church, on a hill, appeared the remains of a castle in the line of the ruined wall.

I sat down on one of the benches to consider the scenery and the silent town. The notes of a cornet broke the silence; they too were sad, comically sad. Sitting there, I did not see two men who were walking in my direction. One of them, with a white beard, leaned on his stick as he walked and looked with sad eyes on the white and reddish mountains which stood out in the distance against the clear blue radiant sky. The other, clean-shaven, held his hat in his hand; he was gesticulating, smiling and talking to himself. He appeared to find this conversation with himself very amusing. They came close to where I was and leaned on the balustrade of the balcony that formed part of the church. I saluted them and to the sad one, since it was he who had looked at me the more attentively, I said: "There seems to be but little life in this town?" He agreed and smiled sadly.

"Labraz," he said, after much other talk, "was formerly an important city with a large number of inhabitants. From its hill it dominated the valley; it owned the corn-land and pasture and the hill-sides over which the thyme in spring spreads its purple carpet. From the ruined castle yonder the wall descended, clasping the town in its half affectionate, half threatening embrace. We had as

many as seven parishes, and in a ravine of the mountain hidden among great ancient pinewoods, stood a Carthusian monastery, surrounded by huts for penitent pilgrims. On certain days the monks came down, with their white frocks and still whiter beards, and begged alms from door to door in the winding streets. On the other side of the mountain, in humble cabins, dwelt woodmen and half-savage goat-herds, men of primitive aspect and rough uncultured speech. In our city the nobles lived according to their rank. The poor obtained firewood from the pinewoods of the convent and worked on the estates of the rich. Then abolition of mortmain drove the Carthusians from the convent; customs changed, new ways, new ideas came in; the noble families were ruined or fled to the capital; their ancestral houses were converted into haylofts. Labraz gradually became deserted and, since carts and mules no longer passed along it, the road was allowed to fall into disrepair. Meanwhile at Chozas, the village of the woodcutters and half savage goat-herds, a factory for sawing wood was founded; then another and another, till a town arose with white houses and red roofs, and the timber-merchants, enriched by the sale of the pinewoods belonging to the convent and the trees from our mountain-sides, went to live there. Labraz sold all its trees. The town, which had formerly combined agriculture and pasturage, determined to subsist by agriculture alone; all the land was broken up, more was put under the plough than could be properly cultivated, and the whole of

it was cultivated badly. One day there came to Labraz certain men to contract for the building of a railway. The mayor, a man opposed to all progress, declared that the railway set the crops on fire and rendered the road useless, and he refused to allow the line to pass through Labraz. The inhabitants of Chozas, on the contrary, did all they could to attract the railway and attained their object. Presently engineers arrived at Chozas with their glasses and measuring-rods; they measured the land, they planted stakes; and soon an army of workmen was making tunnels and entrenchments and the trains passed with their roar and smoke. Chozas grew in size; it had a pretty railway-station, and its streets were lit at night; on the other hand Labraz sank into decay; it lost the dignity of a collegiate city; the court of justice was transferred to Chozas; and scarcely anyone remained at Labraz. Of the nobles only one was left, belonging perhaps to the oldest family of all: the noble Don Juan de Labraz."

"What about us?" asked the old man, who was gesticulating and talking to himself in a strongly foreign accent: "Are we not noble?"

"But we do not belong to Labraz."

"Ah, that makes no difference."

"And does that nobleman still live at Labraz?" I inquired.

"Yes; in one of the houses of the smaller square, near the church; that which has a great coat of arms over the door."

I took my leave and went to the square. The nobleman's house was large, and old, built of solid stone. Its windows and balconies were ornamented in the Renaissance style and its door of Plateresque sculpture had the coat of arms of a noble family. Above this, an heraldic helmet, magnificent with plumes and waving ornaments, filled the space beneath the balcony, its visor open like a toothless mouth. Dark-green lichen covered the rough worn carving. On the topmost story the house had a gallery of arches blocked with planks, bricks and straw. One of the balconies of the first story was covered with pots and broken jars filled with earth, in which grew red and pale geraniums that fell like a splotch of blood over the grey front of the house.

I was considering that deserted square when I heard the bells ring out from the towers, and presently a dozen persons appeared in the porch of the church. Among them came a tall stout old man accompanied by a graceful woman dressed in black. Her hair was grey. The man, of herculean build, walked uncertainly, with drooping head. They passed close to me, and I heard the man ask: "It is a fine day?"—"Yes, beautiful."

The question surprised me and I looked with curiosity at the elderly man and as he raised his head saw that his face was pitted with the smallpox and that he was stone-blind.

The woman looked at me attentively. She was extraordinarily attractive. I saw them cross the square and walk up and down a moment in the sun. Not wishing to seem to

intrude, I went away to explore the town. In passing a small square planted with trees, I paused to consider a school, the windows of which stood open. For some reason the sight of a school always makes me sad: those cardboard alphabets with their large letters, the maps, the black tables with their inkpots bring back my childhood, that preface to life which is seldom pleasant. I was engaged in this sad contemplation when one of the men I had spoken with on the balcony of the church, the one with the foreign accent, addressed me:

“Do you like Labraz?”

“Very much.”

“Are you an artist?”

“I am merely fond of art.”

“If you will come inside I will show you some old pictures that are not bad. This is my house,” he added, pointing to one with a vine, the trunk of which was protected by four walls.

“I have had to protect my vine. That is what I cannot forgive the inhabitants of Labraz: their hatred of trees.”

I followed him through a porch and up a flight of stairs to a large room with two balconies. Some fine pictures hung on the walls: one by Tristan, the portrait of a friar; another by Ribera, dark and gloomy, representing the martyrdom of a saint who was being flayed. There were also in this room small carved figures, some of which were beautiful. Having seen everything, I was about to go away

when the master of the house said that he would be glad if I would have luncheon with him. "I," he said, introducing himself, "am Samuel Bothwell Crawford, an Englishman." In my turn I told him who I was, and we went into the dining-room. During the meal we spoke only of painting and of Labraz. Bothwell Crawford hated England with a fierce hatred; its painters, especially the pre-Raphaelites, filled him with indignation, he declared that they had no notion of the painter's art. I contradicted him throughout and said that although I had only seen photographs of the pictures of Rossetti, Madox Brown and the rest, they seemed to me superior spirits possessed of very high talent. This contradiction seemed to please the Englishman and at dessert he produced a bottle of sherry, and, filling two glasses, exclaimed: "And now, as Swiveller says, let us drink the rosy wine of friendship and sing the old melody 'Begone, dull care.'"

I remembered that this Swiveller is a character in Dickens, in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and I asked the Englishman if he did not consider the author of *Pickwick* an admirable novelist.

"Yes," he answered, very seriously, "he was a good fellow. Let us drink his health."

"The health of one who no longer exists?" I inquired.

"Does he not exist in his books far more than the majority of living persons, more than so many an insignificant wight?"

So we drank Dickens' health in the rosy wine of friendship. The second toast was in honour of Ribera, that great gloomy spirit, whom the Englishman admired, chiefly because he possessed one of his pictures. After that we toasted the masters of Spanish painting, and seeing that the Englishman divided mankind into bad fellows and good fellows, I proposed the health of the good fellow whose name was Domenico Theotocopuli, El Greco. The Englishman bowed, and we drank the health. After that we drank to Zurbaran, to Berruguete, to Pantoja de la Cruz, to Goya, and finished two bottles of sherry. Finally Bothwell Crawford, standing up glass in hand and asking me to stand, said: "Let us now drink to that great gentleman, that great fellow, that unique painter called Diego Velazquez de Silva." With this toast we finished the last bottle, and the Englishman confided to me that as to Spanish literature it seemed to him contemptible.

"But Cervantes . . ."

"Bah!"

"Quevedo . . ."

"Pah! Of Spanish writers the only ones I care for are the author of *La Celestina*, the nobleman of the ode on the death of his father and that priest who tells how he arrives at a meadow:

"Green it was and fair, strewn with flowers sweet:
For wearied man an enviable retreat."

I did not discuss the Englishman's archaic tastes and was about to take my leave when he told me that he had written a novel the scene of which was Labraz and the chief character the blind nobleman of whom his friend had spoken to me that morning. He added that if I was interested he would lend it to me. I answered that I should be very pleased to read it, and he produced from a cupboard a parcel of sheets tied with red tape and gave it to me. Some time passed before I made up my mind to read it. I now copy it here without adding or omitting anything.

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BOOK I


THE TRAVELLERS

I

Star of eve glowing proudly in the West, thou that shinest radiantly amid the clouds and stalkest majestically above the hill: what seest thou through the leaves?—OSSIAN.

NIGHT was falling; the sky was black, and the full moon would appear from a great dark cloud only to hide itself again; a strong wind blew, and the racing clouds gave a strange fantastic appearance to the scenery. Sometimes it was completely dark, sometimes the bushes threw their tall shadows in the clear light of the moon. Wheels of carts had left ruts which the frost had hardened. By the light of the moon or by the uncertain rays of a few stars, the travellers followed the ruts along the road, which every now and then would split into paths or end in a wilderness of mat-weed and broom.

The paths ended, the moon was hidden, and the travellers found themselves confronted by a river flowing through a bed of stones. The travellers were a man and a woman, riding wretched horses. When the moon shone, one could see that the man was tall, thin and graceful; of the woman, mounted on a packsaddle and wrapped in a plaid, only the vague outline was visible.



"We have lost our way," muttered the man quietly, "we must have gone wrong."

"Shall we have to cross the river?"

"We can't help it."

"And is there no bridge?" murmured the woman's weak voice.

"No."

"Is it very deep?"

"We shall see."

The man rode into the river over some tall reeds, and took the other horse by the bridle. The water grew deeper and deeper, and the current stronger. The horses, with water up to their flanks, strove desperately to keep their foothold on the stones of the river-bed. A star here and there shone in the smooth black depths of the river, which slept tranquilly, especially in the backwaters, where the stream seemed motionless. After fording the river here the travellers found another arm of it, and, beyond, the bank rose steep as a wall, impossible to climb. They rode on between the two streams, amid dark osiers and frozen pools which gleamed palely in the uncertain light. Suddenly a plank bridge, long and narrow, rose before them, like the white skeleton of some fabulous monster. The riders crossed the bridge, and by a bridle-path between ravines and brushwood climbed to the top of a rocky hill.

The moon hid its light.

"We must go in that direction," said the man, "towards that star; do you not think so?"

"I do not know, I do not remember," murmured the woman's weak voice.

"I have no sense of locality," added the man with indifference.

Behind the travellers, when the moon again shone, appeared a rugged mountain, white as burnished silver, above great crags and broken ravines. After descending into a deep hollow full of reeds and broom, the road divided into cattle-tracks, which presently disappeared. The moon was hidden behind a cloud and the white light of a single star shone in the sky.

"A nice state of affairs," murmured the man ironically. "If, on the top of this, Juan refuses to receive us, we shall have done well for ourselves."

The woman did not answer.

"Do you think Juan will receive us kindly?" insisted the traveller.

"I do not know, Ramiro," said the woman in a faint voice.

"There are things which a man cannot forget."

"But he may forgive."

"Yes, our brother is so good," added he ironically.

The horses were still splashing in the marshy half-frozen soil. A strong icy wind passed along the hollow and over the desolate plain.

"We will climb one of these hills, to see if we can make out anything from there."

They rode across a deserted ravine, and on the height saw beneath their feet another darker gully, overgrown with bushes, black, almost symmetrical dots which marked the sides of the gully, lit by the pale glimmer of the stars.

"We will go in the direction of that star," murmured the man; "as we have lost our way it is no use turning round and round: we shall at least arrive somewhere." In front of them appeared an everlasting succession of level hills, bulging out like tortoise backs, and the bushes of broom stood out round and black and the frozen pools gleamed in the hollows.

The vague shadow of a house put new heart into them and they urged forward their horses in hope of finding shelter. It was but a shepherd's hut and its door stood wide open.

"We might pass the night here," said the man.

"And supposing there is a watch-dog?" asked the woman.

"Bah, I would soon silence him with a shot from my pistol."

"Oh, I am so frightened."

"Let us go on then."

After crossing one of the hills they came to fields planted with leafless vine-stocks. And after the vineyards came stubble-fields. A dark mass of trees appeared on a hill.

They went towards it, going up by a steep path thick with stones. It was a hermitage with its court. Close by ran the high road.

"We are in the Valley," said the woman. "I will pray here for an instant."

"As you please."

The woman, with the help of her companion, dismounted with difficulty, resting her foot on a bench near the hermitage, and knelt down in the porch. At its further end through a small barred window an altar was lit by a rush-light swimming in a saucer of oil. A very sad-faced Christ with a shock of hair half covering the face and dressed in a skirt of black velvet, hung from a cross. While the woman was praying, the man dismounted, wrapped his cloak closely round him and considered the hermitage with an air of indifference. It was a whitewashed chapel, its tiles were secured by large stones, and its bell supported on a framework of iron. It was built against a ruined convent, of which only four walls remained. In one of these walls was a broken worm-eaten door, and above it a flat stone with a carving of the emblems of death: skull, cross-bones and cross. Above this stone, in order to emphasize the idea of death, a human skull had been embedded in the wall between four bricks. The man smiled mockingly at these mournful emblems and looked through a crack in the door. One could see a small cemetery lit by the light of the moon; a few broken sticks, remains of crosses, rested on the weeds

and brambles; a few white stones appeared among the weeds.

He walked round the ruins of the convent and came back to the hermitage.

"Shall we go on?"

"When you please."

He assisted the woman to mount, mounted himself, and they rode on along the highway. From the hermitage ran a line of stone crosses, mostly without transverse limbs.

They passed through a village, two or three houses by the side of the road; half an hour later they passed a second. A few lights appeared above them.

"Are those the lights of Labraz?" asked the man.

"Yes, I think so."

They were now near the town. They could vaguely distinguish a black mass of walls and roofs, among which dark tall towers stood out with their belfries resembling black arms. Thick clouds scudded across the sky, and the mass of houses surrounded by their wall would now appear in the light of the moon, now sink back into the darkness of the night.

"I begin to remember it all, as if I had never left it," said the man. "Isn't this the Hornabeque?"

"Yes."

"It was an avenue of tall trees near the wall against a broad bastion. We used to play as children on those cannon," he said, pointing out a few set on old gun-carriages.

The riders advanced and entered a road with battlements on either side. "Let us hurry," said the man; "the gate is open."

An arch lit by a faint lantern appeared embedded in the wall. The traveller urged his horse to a trot and approached the gate. The watchman was about to shut it when he pressed forward and shouted: "One moment." The woman came up and the two travellers passed through the gate, crossed a narrow passage and entered the town. The street ascended steeply. It began in small houses and hovels but presently came to taller houses. They were soon in the square. The tower of the collegiate church appeared in a street above, tall and black like a gigantic sentinel among a mass of roofs.

"We have arrived," murmured the woman, in a voice even fainter than before.

"We will rest here a little," answered the man. And in front of a house which stood on an arcade they reined in their horses.

II

When I left London (I'm a Kentish man by birth, though) and took that situation here, I quite made up my mind that it was the dullest little out-of-the-way corner in England, and that there would be some credit in being jolly under such circumstances.

—DICKENS, *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

THE corner-house of two streets, the Calle de Jesus, running from the Puerta Nueva to the Plaza Mayor, and the Cuesta del Patriarca, was the inn of the Goya. It was a large ancient house, of stone up to the first floor and after that of brick. On the side of the square it looked on to the arcades, and it was here that was the shop which served as tavern, wine-shop, grocer and ironmonger. On the Calle de Jesus side the house had a wide entrance for carts in the form of an arch, and above this was a broad porch supported on columns of brick with bases of stone. The peasants who came up to Labraz by the Calle de Jesus from the neighbouring villages, called the house the inn of the porch. This detail was sufficient in itself to distinguish an inhabitant of Labraz from other persons, as one might say a Greek from a barbarian: the inhabitant of Labraz spoke of the inn of the Goya, the peasant of the neighbourhood spoke of the inn of the porch. The dining-room of the inn and the shop formed the casino of the town; in the afternoons and eve-

nings the principal inhabitants of the lower part of the town took their coffee there, or at least something which was called coffee and which might not be good but was certainly cheap. From nightfall to half past nine or ten at night the schoolmaster, two attorneys, an usurer, the surgeon Don Tomás and one or two others assembled there. Some played at *mus*, with worn and greasy cards, raining blows on the table and conquering gradually a pile of white or red beans, which were afterwards exchanged for farthings. Other card-players preferred *tute* or *brisca*; the more aristocratic devoted themselves to ombre or quadrille; the meaner sort showed a predilection for *mus*, *guiñote* and *ganapierde*, while the gamblers went in for *timba*, *siete y medio* or *trente-et-un* and the misanthropic played patience.

The surgeon Don Tomás, who lived in the square, used to go every evening to the shop, take up a newspaper to which the Goya subscribed, put on his spectacles and bury himself so deep in the reading of the news that it was useless to ask him a question, for he paid no attention. Besides the card-players, the devotees of Bacchus and those whose purpose was to learn the political news, which were then important, there were others, mostly young men, although there were a few exceptions, who paid tribute to Venus in the persons of Blanca and Marina, the two daughters of the hostess Goya. In the hands of the Goya the inn was a paying concern. She had been romantic in her youth, and there had been much talk about her love affairs with young

men of good family belonging to the upper part of the town, at the time of the first civil war.

As a result of the gossip concerning her the Goya at twenty-five seemed destined to remain unwed, when her father, who owned the tavern, arranged her marriage with a young Basque servant of the house who was sufficiently philosophical to despise the pomp and vanity of this world, to pay no heed to the talk of the town and to marry the Goya. Domingo Chiqui, for by his Christian name and his nickname was he known, offended during many years the chivalrous sentiments of the city of Labraz. He was no longer very young when he married, short rather than tall, merry and addicted to lying, and when it was a question of work, as light as a bar of lead; as to his appetite, it was bottomless, like the fabled jar of the Danaides. His nose was long and hooked, and an Adam's apple rose from his throat like another crook desperately anxious to join his nose. Domingo Chiqui was a man given to fantastic ideas. He had solved the problem of how to live without working, a fact which was to him an unending source of enthusiasm and joviality, so that, when he met a countryman of his own kidney, who seemed to him as careless and gay as he was himself, he would relate to him in Basque the Odyssey of his good fortune, interrupting his story at every moment with a snuffling laugh or strange hoarse sounds in his throat.

Domingo Chiqui spoke Spanish fairly well, and only made a Basque hash of the genders when for some reason

he was obliged to express himself more rapidly than was his wont. The fantastic ideas of Domingo Chiqui were evident both in his conversation and in the account-books in which in a large rough hand he entered in blue ink the household expenses and the straw and barley of the muleteers. Domingo Chiqui called the inhabitants of Labraz, and, generally speaking, all who spoke Spanish, *Belarri mochas*, which in Basque means Shortears, and this word must have had more meanings for him than has the Bible, for he would utter it now sarcastically, now with disdain or irony, making hoarse sounds and winking his eyes. If a French organ-grinder passed through the town he would have him in and those who frequented the tavern would thus hear airs from *La Favorita*, *Marta* and other romantic tunes. In the town the inn of the Goya had the bad reputation of harbouring Liberals, and this was due to the frequent presence there of Perico Armentia. Perico was one of the Liberals of the town. To be Liberal meant for him to be gruff and outspoken. He owned a plot of land and a vineyard which yielded him a bare sustenance, and he spent his days in amazing the town. His moustache was of an alarming size, and he wore his hair long; his suits were too large for him, he wore a large hat and carried a huge stick. Another friend of Domingo Chiqui and of Perico was the baker, who owned an oven in the square opposite the inn. He would appear at the door of the inn in his vest after crossing the square with breast and arms bare, even in the

depth of winter. He greeted mine host with a "Well Domingo?" and Domingo Chiqui always had some witty remark ready for his benefit; the baker would laugh heartily, and they would converse for a few minutes: "I have left my sisters at work kneading; in a moment I must go to bake."

But Domingo's most constant friend was a fellow-countryman who owned a set of ninepins. He was of a very sad and serious turn of mind, spoke very little, and in a disdainful indifferent tone. He seemed to be got up in disguise; anyone would have thought his beard was false. He wore light-coloured suits and marvellous hats; and this, added to his serious mysterious appearance gave him the air of a conspirator about to take part in some tremendous plot. The owner of the ninepins seemed bound to levy a daily tribute of a certain number of glasses of wine, and he stayed there until he had done so, to the despair of the Goya. When the gloomy man spoke, it was only to make a bet without rhyme or reason. Someone would say: "Perico has bought a four-year mule, and it has cost him twelve pounds." "Not he!" would say the man of the ninepins.

"He hasn't?"

"The price was not twelve pounds, and the mule was not four years old." The other, who had looked into the mule's mouth and had witnessed the transaction, insisted that it was a fact, and then the gloomy one would put his hand in his sash, take out a green purse and say: "I bet a pound that

it is not so." Usually the man who had witnessed the transaction said nothing, supposing that that man must have some reason to be so positive. With the baker the gloomy man made a bet but lost it. The baker had said that he would enter the oven in his house, place two small loaves on the heated tiles and when they were baked go in and take them out. The man of the ninepins said disdainfully that it was impossible, and the baker won the bet in the presence of a dozen witnesses or so. Ten years after his marriage Domingo Chiqui died, possibly from having lived too well, and left the Goya with two daughters. There was no memory in the town of an illness and death so gay as those of the hostess' husband. His friends would go to visit him in the room where he lay in bed, and his illness seemed to have sharpened his wits and added to his facetiousness, for at every instant he made some witty remark in his intricate language, so that laughter filled his bedroom instead of lamentation and where one would have expected sad long faces were only cheerful looks and gleaming merry eyes. In his last moments his wit made even the priest who had gone to confess him laugh; he consoled his friends with a grotesque account of the road of purgatory he would have to tread and how he would tell St. Peter that, although a tavernkeeper, he had not often baptized his wine. When he was at his last gasp he remembered that at Guetaria, his native village, when mothers made their children dance to the sound of the drum they would say in bad Spanish as the

music ended: "Make an end, *plan, plan,*" he made a last effort to master the stiffening muscles of his face and gave utterance to his last jest: "Make an end, *plan, plan,*" he murmured; and with a wink in his best manner and a mocking snort turned his face to the wall, perhaps in order to conceal any trace of pain or agony, and so died.

The Goya after her husband's death began to feel a certain respect for his memory, which increased as she listened to the praises of the dead man's friends. Her romantic tendencies and delight in novelty found vent amply in the new institution of a lending library of novels. The two daughters, Blanca and Marina, eight and five years old at the time of their father's death, grew up into two pretty girls. The elder, Blanca, was rather like her father; her nose was fairly long, her face oval; but what was a caricature in Domingo became noble features in his daughter. Her character was quiet, steady and serene; she was an excellent housewife and thanks to her everything was in admirable order at the inn. Almost from a child she had been in love with Antonio Bengoa, a nephew of Don Diego de Beamonte, a noble *hidalgo* of the upper town, a descendant of an illustrious family, proud and haughty. Antonio de Bengoa loved Blanca with real fervour, and as he was certain that his uncle would not allow him to marry the daughter of an innkeeper and would disinherit him if he did, he had chosen a chemist's career and hoped to marry her as soon as he had ended his studies at Madrid.

The younger daughter Marina was of a very different type. She seemed to have inherited all the characteristics of her mother; she had the same romantic yearnings, a tremendous contempt for what was common and ordinary and a longing to live, to see the world and not to rust away in that corner. While her sister worked and attended to the management of the house, down to the smallest details, Marina would sit at the door of the inn and watch, without seeing, the peasants with their mules cross the square and the beggars with their long brown capes asking an alms from door to door, and the women with their water-jars on their heads. How she hated it all! How willingly would she have left the town and its monotonous life and fled away she knew not whither!

III

Hark, I hear horses.

Give us a light there, ho!

—SHAKESPEARE, *Macbeth*.

OF those wont to assemble in the shop the only two now remaining were two young men who were both courting the younger daughter of the hostess. Besides these there was a muleteer, an English painter, both guests of the house, and an old man who acted as a kind of servant. The two youths who were courting Marina belonged to well-to-do shopkeepers' families in the town. One of them, Galo Armendariz, son of a rich confectioner, was tall, dark, with an olive complexion and a fine bearing. He wore a jacket with large lapels, a tall collar, and a great necktie, and over his shoulders a cape with a silken tassel which he amused himself by twirling between his fingers. The other, Benito Zárate, was of rougher make; he was strongly and stoutly built, with a square-shaped head and prominent cheek-bones. He kept his hands in the pockets of his black jacket, and between this and his corduroy trousers wore a wide red sash. Marina from time to time left her mother's side to flirt with her adorers, disdaining both impartially.

"Can I speak to you later?" asked Galo in a low voice as she passed him.

"Impossible."

"Impossible!"

"No, I say it cannot be: Blanca has her eye on us. Yesterday when we were speaking at the window she came from her room and listened to our conversation."

Galo whirled the silk tassel in his fingers and muttered:

"Your sister is very scrupulous."

Marina, who delighted to play off her adorers one against the other, went to the other end of the counter, where Benito Zárata was gazing at her, frowning.

"Shall I be able to speak to you to-night from the street?"

"No, not to-night."

"Why not?"

"Because it's impossible. He" (and Marina indicated Galo with a swift glance of her eyes) "is sure to be about."

"Why don't you send him away?"

"Why should I?"

"If you don't, I will break his head."

"Bah," answered the girl with marked disdain.

The suitors exchanged angry glances. Marina went over to where her sister was engaged at crochet work, and began to talk to her in a low voice, looking alternately at the rivals. Near the light of the lamp likewise sat the English painter artist with a painted canvas on his knees, amusing himself by daubing it and holding it at arm's

length to note the effect. The Goya, who had taken up a greasy unbound book, was reading attentively. The other two men, the muleteer and the old man who was half servant, half guest of the house, were seated in shadow and were invisible.

Marina, restless as a child, was preventing her sister from working.

"Come, don't be an infant," said Blanca.

The Goya raised her head and, pointing with her finger to the greasy book that she was reading, exclaimed, as though she were speaking to someone who was not present:

"This scene fills me with greater enthusiasm each time I read it. The Duke Rodolfo is about to enter the room of the dressmaker. I think he is her lover; yes, he must be her lover, I have no doubt of it."

The muleteer seated in the dark, bent forward towards the old man and said: "I say, Preacher, perhaps the book reminds her of some of her own past, eh?"

The old man whom the muleteer had addressed as Preacher exclaimed in a fine bass voice: "What a brute he is! Yet the wretch speaks sooth!" The Goya, who had half heard the muleteer's remark, asked dryly: "What did he say?"

Blanca, who had also understood their allusions, murmured, looking severely at the Goya: "I don't know why you read those novels, Mother: they are nothing but lies."

"Lies? Yes, a strange kind of lies."

"Lies and absurdities," returned Blanca roundly.

"Ah, oh, all lies. Stupid, stupid," said the Englishman, raising his head.

"But what can you know about the world?" argued the hostess, addressing Blanca. "Of such cases as those related here I have seen many. Yes I have indeed, very many."

"I should think so, and in her own house too," muttered the muleteer in the ear of the Preacher, but in a voice too low for anyone else to hear.

"He, he," laughed the old man maliciously. "What a brute is this Aragonese! But, devil take it, he speaks sooth!"

There was a long silence. One could hear the ticking of the cuckoo clock in the hall. Marina was still seated by her sister, hindering her work. Zárate had perched himself on the counter, as if he wished to prove how much at home he was; while Galo was twirling his cape-string rapidly and striding up and down the shop.

"Come, Marina, since you are doing nothing, shut the door," said the Goya.

Here two suitors were beforehand with her: Galo took the bar, Zárate, jumping down from the counter went into an inner room and returned with the bar. They closed the small outer counter and were about to fasten the door when the sound of hoofs came from the street.

"Someone coming," said Zárate.

"Who can it be?" murmured the Goya.

"And they are coming here."

In another instant two loud knocks sounded.

"Ask who it is," said the hostess.

"Bah, are we not enough men here not to be afraid?" muttered the Preacher; and rising slowly from his seat, he took away the bar and opened the door.

"Good night," said a man's voice outside. "Can you give us a lodging for a night?"

The Preacher hesitated to answer; but the man who had spoken, without waiting for a reply, assisted the woman who was with him to dismount, and in another instant the two travellers entered the shop.

"Good night, gentlemen. There will be a room for us, will there not?" said the man, advancing to the counter with a cheerful expression; then turning to his companion, he added: "Sit down and rest: you must be worn out."

The man was wrapped in a dark cloak, and when he took this off appeared in a large frock-coat fastened by a single gold button, a broad hat and riding-boots. He left his cloak and hat on the counter, and the light of the lamp now revealed his features, which were perfectly regular, with a finely shaped nose, large sad eyes, a black beard and long hair which gleamed like ebony. He had a very distinguished look, which showed itself in every movement and gesture. The woman seemed older than he, she was thin and weak, dressed in black; her nose was slender and

slightly aquiline; her eyes grey and sunken; her mouth large and kindly, and her expression straightforward, open and energetic.

The Goya, overcome by the aristocratic air of the newcomer, bade the Aragonese, the muleteer, take the horses round to the stable. The muleteer got up, a squat man with a swollen face half hidden by a black kerchief. A moment later the hoofs of the horses sounded in the court of the inn. The Preacher then appeared at the shop door, a look of deep surprise evident in his face. The Goya approached him, as though to give an order.

"It looks like him, doesn't it?" she said in a low voice.

"Yes, Goya, it is he. It is Don Ramiro," answered the Preacher.

IV

Philosopher, Sir?

An observer of human nature, Sir.

—DICKENS, *Pickwick*.

THERE was a moment of great uncertainty among those who were in the shop; they looked at one another without speaking a word. Marina gazed intently at the new-comer and her look was eloquent of eager curiosity. The Englishman continued to give fresh touches to his water-colour. The Goya and Blanca turned their attention to the lady.

"Are you ill, Señorita?" inquired Blanca affably.

"No, only tired, very tired."

"You have come far?"

"Yes, very far."

"Would you take my wife somewhere where there is a fire?" asked the gentlemen.

"The fact is," murmured the Goya, "that at this hour of the night there is only a fire in the kitchen."

"I do not mind," answered the traveller, rising.

"Come, Señorita," said Blanca. "You are frozen."

"Yes, I am shivering."

"Your hands are so cold."

Blanca and the traveller entered a dark passage at the end of which in the blackness gleamed the red flames of a fire.

The man, addressing the Goya, said: "If you could prepare a room for us."

"One or two?" asked the hostess with her usual curiosity.

"As you like. If you could give us something to eat we should be glad of it."

"I am afraid it will not be much, it being so late."

"The chief thing is that it should come without delay. My wife is in delicate health."

"She is your wife?"

"Yes, Señora."

"May it be for many years."

"Thank you," replied the gentlemen with indifference.

The Goya entered a room close by. The two rival young men remained in the shop. The Englishman placed a collection of brushes, feathers, small sponges and plates in a spotted handkerchief on the counter.

The new-comer began to converse with Marina. His talk was of an amiable tone, courteous and affable, and at once inspired confidence, while his smile was that of an outspoken boy.

"Do you not also wish to sit by the fire?" asked Marina.

"I prefer to be by your side." Then seeing the hostess coming back, he addressed her with the question: "Is she your daughter?"

"Yes, Señor."

"She is charming. You may be proud of having so pretty a daughter. And her name?"

"Marina."

"If you would give me something to drink, Marina; provided it is not water."

"Whatever you please."

Marina passed behind the counter, opened a cupboard containing rows of bottles opposite the door and stood on a bench to take one down.

"I did not wish to trouble you."

"Oh, it is no trouble. So please say what you would like." And the girl coquettishly crossed her arms on her breast.

"Anything. Hands such as yours can produce nothing which is not ravishing."

All this secret conversation between the new-comer and Marina caused great indignation in the two rivals, who considered it necessary to talk loud and laugh insolently. Then, not knowing what to do and being unwilling to go away, they took up a pack of cards and sat down to play.

"Truly, my good lady," said the gentleman with his characteristic air of simplicity, "you are fortunate in having two such daughters, for I presume that the young lady who accompanied my wife is also your daughter."

"Yes, she is."

"They are exquisite."

"Poor things," murmured the Goya shamefacedly. "This one, Marina, is mischievous and lively; the other, Blanca, is more, well, more serious."

Marina had poured out a glass of sherry and approached the gentleman.

Before drinking it he asked: "So you are the mischievous and lively one of the two sisters?"

"Yes, Señor," answered the girl, blushing, for he had addressed her in the second person singular.

The gentleman, saluting the Englishman and casting a rapid glance at the two younger men, said: "Will you join me, gentlemen?"

"Many thanks, Sir," answered the Englishman. The others answered with a grunt. The gentleman drank off the sherry and thanked the girl as he set the glass down on the tray.

"Mr. Bothwell," said Marina mockingly, pointing to the Englishman, "is in one of his milky weeks."

"I can't think what you mean," said the gentleman.

"It is absurd," answered the girl. "From time to time he takes nothing but milk during a whole week."

"Laughing at the Englishman," said the latter, smiling.

"Are you English?" asked the new-comer.

"I am, Sir."

"One can be nothing greater."

"Thank you, Sir; but allow me not to share your opinion of the English."

"You do not believe in the superiority of your countrymen?"

"Ah, oh, the English are beasts, selfish, brutal."

"Besides, they must all be mad," added Marina.

"No, not all, unfortunately," answered Bothwell; "only a few. You are here, Sir," he added, "in one of the most cultured towns of Spain."

"Indeed?" asked the new-comer, smiling.

"Ah, oh, yes. Labraz is one of the most artistic of towns. They do not allow manufacturers here, nor tall chimneys nor modern buildings."

"How is that?"

"There is nothing of that false and stupid progress; nothing artificial here."

"It will come, it will come by and by."

"Ah, oh, when that happens this Englishman will be dead. After me the deluge," he added, laughing. Then in a low voice he added confidentially: "All the products of Labraz are genuine: the wine, the priests' sons, the law-suits, the barrels, and a mine of ochre which I have discovered."

"And how did you discover such a paradise as Labraz, Mr. Bothwell? Have you been here long?"

"A year; but I did not discover Labraz: it was a friend and fellow-countryman brought me here. My friend was one of the most curious men in the world. He had determined to convert Spain to Protestantism and had been

traversing the country for some years with his Bibles. He was received sometimes with stones, sometimes with shots; but as he was called Tack, which, as you know, in English means those golden-headed nails on chairs; in Spanish the word is, I can't remember."

"*Tachuelas?*"

"That's it. Well, as his name was Tack, he resolved to be as piercing as his name. When Tack arrived at a town he went to see the Liberals and persons of advanced ideas, made them a speech and left them two or three Bibles; the Liberals looked at the little books in amazement and if they did not themselves burn them their wives did. The priest would at once get wind of the affair, the priest told the mayor, the mayor ordered the arrest of the agent and popped him into prison, usually a dark unventilated room full of cobwebs, rats and other vermin.

"My friend would then dispatch a letter to the British Ambassador in Madrid and, pending an answer, devoted himself in the quiet of his prison to write his recollections and continue a dictionary of gipsy slang which he had in hand. The order for his release would arrive; Tack would pack his two works into his bag, take up his portmanteau and leave the town pursued by people throwing stones at him or even firing at him. In the next town he adopted the same tactics and a week or so later would be again in jail. With this evangelical man I came to Labraz."

"Did they receive you with cannon-shot?"

"No. At first they wished to lynch us, but they refrained."

"And you nevertheless remained here?"

"Why not?"

"Are you a Stoic?"

"I don't know. I have a book by Marcus Aurelius in my trunk but I assure you that I have not read it. My social and philosophical ideas are summed up in Swift's exclamation: '*Vive la bagatelle.*'" The Englishman then got up and said: "If you remain here some days I shall have the pleasure of seeing you and shall be able to show you the mine of ochre I have discovered. I must go now because I have to get up early. One must work to live." And Mr. Bothwell, after a formal salutation, went off, carrying in his hand the spotted handkerchief with his brushes and sponges and paint-box.

"What does that gentleman do?" asked the new-comer of Marina.

"He paints."

"A trifle dotty, I suppose?"

"Yes, but he is a very good fellow."

The new-comer soon forgot the Englishman and began to flirt with Marina. Galo and Zárate caught the words "beautiful" and "charming" and thought it became them to behave outrageously, laughing and talking loudly.

The gentleman looked at them with indifference and asked Marina if either of them were her sweetheart.

"Oh, no, Sir."

"They have the air of bullies, and are looking at me fiercely because I am talking to you."

Marina began to laugh.

"Do you pay them any attention?"

"Not I."

"And quite right: you are worth something more than clowns disguised as gentlemen."

"I know I am not," murmured the girl sadly.

The Goya, seeing the conversation between the newcomer and her daughter showed no sign of coming to an end, called Marina. Zárate followed her. "What was that man saying to you?" he asked her. "Nothing," she answered shortly, and turned her back on him. Meanwhile the gentleman took a chair, sat down with his back to the wall, lit a cigar and sat pensively contemplating the whirls of the smoke as they rose towards the ceiling. The Preacher entered the shop and warned Marina's two young suitors that he was going to close. Galo and Zárate went out, looking darkly at the gentleman, who continued wrapped in his thoughts.

The old man closed the two wings of the door and placed the bar across them; then he sat down on a bench.

Marina entered and left the shop several times, carrying plates and glasses and never failing to glance with the corner of her eye at the gentleman as he sat there musing.

His face now showed that he had come to a sudden de-

cision. He took a note-book from his pocket, tore off a leaf and rapidly wrote a few words on it in pencil on the counter. He folded it in the form of a triangle and asked the Preacher: "Could you have this taken at once to the house of Don Juan Labraz in the Plaza of the Old Church?"

"The Aragonese can take it; but Don Juan will be in bed."

"Let him leave the letter in that case."

"Very good," answered the Preacher; and getting up heavily, he took the note, limped along the passage, spoke with someone and immediately returned. The old man sat down again on his customary bench. Neither of the men spoke. The gentleman began to walk up and down the shop. Through the door at the back of the counter the inn-kitchen appeared at the end of a passage; in it near the fire sat the traveller and Blanca, and an old woman crouched by the stove and from time to time heaped more logs on the fire burning on the iron grate fixed to the wall.

V

Bring me no more reports; let them fly all.

—SHAKESPEARE, *Macbeth*.

SUDDENLY the gentleman addressed the Preacher with the abrupt question: "You know me, don't you?"

"Yes, you are Don Ramiro."

"Yes. How is Juan?"

"The Mayorazgo? He is well."

"And the girl?"

"Poor thing, she is so quick and playful. Her aunt Doña Micaela is here at present."

"Micaela is here?"

"Yes."

"She must be a woman by now."

"A fine woman she is too."

"Yes, she was a pretty girl. And is Juan very fond of Rosarito?"

"Very."

"And Micaela?"

"Also."

"Is the child tall?"

"Yes."

"And good?"

"Yes."

"Is she like me in face?"

"No; she resembles Doña, Cesarea, her mother. The other day I was ringing the bells for Mass, for, as you know, I ring them from the landing of the tower staircase, when whom do I see but Doña Rosarito, who had come up the stairs alone and says to me: 'What are you doing, Preacher?'

"'Ringing the bells, Doña Rosarito,' I said.

"'You will tire yourself,' said she.

"'Oh, no I won't.'

"'If I had the strength I would help you, but I am very small.'

"And she got on to my knees. A dear little thing."

At that moment Marina came in to tell Don Ramiro that supper was ready.

"I am coming, my pretty one," he said.

"When you please."

Don Ramiro turned to the Preacher and continued to question him:

"And what did the Mayorazgo do when Cesarea went away?"

"What could he do? He was so sad and disconsolate that it was dreadful to see him," said the Preacher in a determined voice. "When he went to church and took his place in the choir one could see the tears start from his sightless eyes and run down his cheeks. He who is so

much of a man too! And then the old mother Cesarea."

"I don't wish to hear anything about that," murmured Don Ramiro in an altered voice, striding up and down the shop.

"As you asked me . . ."

"No, no; enough news: I do not wish to know any more."

And, quickly giving himself the lie, he asked again:

"And what said the town?"

"The town said that this treatment of Don Juan was a . . ."

"What?"

"Well, it said that it was a piece of villiany."

A smile passed over the mouth and eyes of Don Ramiro, and he added in a tone of indifference:

"Possibly the town was right."

Marina returned to summon him to supper and say that his wife was in the dining-room. His face brightened and he gently put his arm round the girl's waist and said in an insinuating voice: "Happy the man who is master of thy charms." Marina broke away from his embrace, and he disappeared down the passage. The Preacher remained alone in the shop. The sight of Don Ramiro with his arm round the girl's waist had reminded him of a scene he had witnessed many years ago. The Preacher was a tall stout old man with long hair and tufts of it over his ears; he wore a short smock and a blue

bonnet on his head. He had been a corporal in the country-police until rheumatism in the legs had made him unfit for further service. He lived in the house of the Goya half as a guest, half as a servant. He had a good voice and sang in the collegiate church; whence no doubt he derived his nickname of the Preacher. This was the recollection that occurred to him when he saw Don Ramiro with his arm round the girl's waist: Long ago, more than twenty years, the authorities of the province, acting on the suggestion of the mayor of Labraz, ordered that a band of gipsies who had established their camp in the vaults of the castle should be expelled from the town and conducted to the boundary of the province. The Preacher and six companions were commanded to keep guard over the band till they reached the frontier of Vizcaya. It was market-day in Labraz: peasant-men and women were riding in on horses, mules and donkeys, bringing corn and vegetables to sell; some of them were wrapped in very long brown capes, others in cloaks and striped plaids; and through the midst of this procession went the band of gipsies, squealing and lamenting loudly, and behind them came the guards in their high-crowned hats lined with oilskin, their long jackets fastened across their chest by broad white straps of leather, their knapsacks, cartridge-cases and their guns on their shoulder. Of the whole band only the leader, a tall and manly gipsie, appeared quiet. He was carrying a small brown boy on his back and sing-

ing as he went; sometimes he would put an arm round his wife's waist and walk with her at the head of the troop. At the first village of the neighbouring province the mayor formally received the gipsies and locked them up in the ground-floor of the town hall. A year later, as the Preacher and another guard were returning across country, they found, where a path and a poor bridle-road crossed, a seven-year-old little boy seated on a stone.

"What are you doing here?" asked the Preacher.

"Nothing."

"Where do you come from?"

"I don't know."

"How did you come here?"

"I walked."

"Have you no home?"

"No."

"Whom are you living with, then?"

"I was with some gipsies."

The Preacher remembered the scene of the previous year. He and his companion debated what they should do with the child and decided to take him to Labraz. For some days the boy wandered about the town; then he disappeared. Two or three years later the mother of Don Juan the Mayorazgo, Dama Cesarea, walking in the Hornabeque, saw a tattered boy asleep in a hollow of the wall. Seeing a fine boy so deserted, the compassionate lady felt pity for him and ordered that he should be taken to her house.

Often the Preacher had thought that in this boy protected by Dama Cesarea he recognized the gipsy boy and the boy they had found a year later in the hills. The child found by Dama Cesarea was Don Ramiro.

VI

Under our tents I'll play the eavesdropper.

—SHAKESPEARE, *King Richard III.*

WHEN the travellers were settled in the dining-room, the Goya and her daughter had betaken themselves to the kitchen. The kitchen was a large one, with a high ceiling. By the stove was a wooden dais with tables and benches, where the muleteers and peasants were wont to eat on market-days. A fire was burning on the hearth. While Blanca was waiting on the guests at table, in the kitchen they talked in curious whispers. The wind whistled in the great chimney and moaned dully in the distance. A discreet knock on the door had been repeated several times without anyone answering. The Englishman, who had heard the knock, came down from his room and told them that someone had been knocking for some time. The Preacher opened the door under the arcade, and a small man appeared, with a lantern in his hand. "Hullo, Señor Captain, sit down," said the Goya at sight of him. The man thus addressed as Captain sat down, blew out the lantern and set it on a chair. By the light of the fire they could see his slender form sunk in a dark suit like a sword in its sheath. His dress was old-fashioned, with knee-

breeches. He was one of the most important frequenters of the Goya's house. He might be seen frequently in the Calle de Jesus and near the town wall with a great key in his hand. If any Labraz townsman were asked: "Who is that little man?" he would answer: "He is the Captain of the Keys." The questioner would wonder why the keys required a captain, and on pursuing his inquiry concerning the profession of the thin stiff little man, would learn that it was his duty to shut the New Gate of Labraz. Of the two gates of the town, the Gate of France was closed at nightfall, while the New Gate was kept open till nine or ten at night. The tranquillity of the inhabitants of Labraz could not have been better assured: they had the triple protection of the doors of their rooms, the doors of their houses and the gates of the town. At nine o'clock at night in winter and at ten in summer a cornet under the orders of the Captain proceeded to the top of the tower and blew a blast of his bugle to summon the scattered townsfolk. He who heard it near the town wall hastened his pace; he who heard it farther off started to run; and if the martial sound reached the ears of any a league away he would be in two minds, whether to run or to go slowly, and usually after a short desperate spurt he would realize, when all out of breath, that he could not arrive in time, and resigning himself to sleeping outside the town, would proceed slowly. When the bugle had sounded, the Captain swung to the iron-bound, nail-studded door, and during a quarter of an

hour allowed free entrance through ■ smaller door in it. The townsfolk tumbled in like boys pouring out of school. They were mostly day-labourers returning from the fields, and a few women who had been seeking adventures near the town wall. The Captain watched the arrival of the late-comers, and would say in the kindly tone of one set in authority: "Come along; it is time to close." He then shut the smaller door, and after that a palisaded double-winged door facing the town; he then went up a staircase to a wooden balcony ensconced in the recess of the gate, above a large crucifix. That was where the Captain of the Keys lived. Often in the middle of the night he would have to get up, much against his will, to open for some townsman or for the doctor. The Captain of the Keys was a very important personage in the house of the Goya. According to his own account he represented for the whole town the family and the tranquillity of the home. In his hands was the key in which securely rested the whole life of the town. The Captain could never understand, and one can well believe it, that there should be towns mad and imprudent enough to pull down their walls. This seemed to him the greatest absurdity. The Captain of the Keys asked no questions. To be told who were the travellers who had come to the house of the Goya he regarded as part of his official position, and as it did not beseem his dignity to ask what had occurred he waited to be enlightened, as he considered was his right.

"All quiet in the town?" asked the Englishman.

"I have it in the hollow of my hand," answered the Captain.

This answer made the Englishman smile, and he rubbed his hands as a sign of satisfaction.

The Goya took very little notice of the Captain. "And the Aragonese?" she asked Marina.

"He has gone out."

"Where?"

"I do not know."

"Preacher," shouted the Goya.

"What is it?" asked the old man, rousing himself with a start from his drowsiness.

"Where is the Aragonese?"

"He has gone to take a letter."

"A letter? Who to?"

"To the Mayorazgo."

"From Don Ramiro?"

"Yes."

"Why was I not told?" asked the Goya angrily.

The Preacher shrugged his shoulders.

"What can he have written? What mischief has he been devising?" exclaimed mine hostess.

"It will all fall on poor Don Juan," said the Preacher with conviction.

"What induced him to return here? That is what I wonder," said the hostess.

"I expect he wants to take away the child."

"More likely he wants to leave his wife at Labraz."

"Yes, perhaps that is it."

The Captain of the Keys, seeing that he was given no satisfactory explanation, asked a question:

"Is it Don Ramiro of Labraz who has arrived?"

"Yes," answered the hostess.

"Of Labraz?" intervened the Preacher. "Don Ramiro is not a Labraz. He may bear the name, but he does not belong to the family."

The Englishman gave the Preacher an enthusiastic look:

"The family . . . blue blood, energetic, beautiful . . ."

"What you say must be true, Preacher," observed the hostess.

"Of course it is."

"Nevertheless the uncle of the Mayorazgo, Dama Cesarea's brother, recognized him before his death."

"He did so simply out of hatred."

Blanca, who had come from the dining-room, exclaimed:

"How sorry I am for that poor woman! What a life she must lead with that man. He seems a devil," she added; "fire seems to come from his eyes."

"Yes, indeed," answered Marina vaguely.

"And he looks a mere boy," said the Preacher; "yet he must be thirty-six or thirty-seven."

"Impossible," said Marina.

"I should think he was," answered the Goya; "he must be about the same age as the Mayorazgo."

"If I were Don Juan," broke out Blanca energetically, "I would not receive him in my house nor ever speak to him again."

"The truth is," said the Captain of the Keys slowly, "that the blame rests with Dama Cesarea, Don Juan's mother. When she first took in Don Ramiro he was treated as a foundling, which indeed he was. But when Don Juan became blind after the smallpox all her love for her son changed to indifference."

"Even hatred, I think," interrupted the Preacher.

"Yes indeed, you are right, Preacher," said the Captain. "Who would have thought that Dama Cesarea would have ended by loving a stranger better than her own son!"

"No doubt she was a very good old lady, God have mercy on her soul," murmured the old man. "But what she did with Don Juan was very wrong: not even the animals desert their young."

"The extraordinary thing was that she succeeded in inducing her brother to adopt Don Ramiro," added the Captain.

"That was out of hatred, merely out of hatred," murmured the Preacher.

"I think he bewitched her," said the Goya. "He is so handsome and attractive, he must bewitch people whenever he chooses."

Marina nodded in assent and remained wrapped in thought.

"And that poor woman, ill as she is," exclaimed Blanca. "She said just now as she sat by the fire: 'I thought I would never arrive, but I shall have the satisfaction of dying at Labraz.'"

"Did she say that?" asked Marina.

"Yes, and he paid not the slightest attention, calm and gay as ever. He must be very wicked."

"And he did not say where they have come from?" said the Goya.

"I did not ask him."

No one thought of going to bed. They eagerly awaited the return of the Aragonese. The Preacher remained by the fire, dozing or thinking; the Englishman was rubbing his hands together; the Captain of the Keys, seated on his chair, waited to see what the result might be before retiring to his corner. The Goya moved restlessly about: sometimes she would approach the dining-room door on tiptoe, look through a crack and return to the kitchen to communicate the result of her observation.

"They do not say a word. She is very sad."

"They must be very tired," said the Captain of the Keys.

"Good heavens, what is going to happen?" the hostess kept asking herself. "Has Don Ramiro written to Don Juan telling him where he is? And will Don Juan come here?"

"Well, if the Mayorazgo loses his temper," cried the Preacher, "blind as he is, he will crush that gipsy with a single blow as one crushes a fly."

"He would do nothing so barbarous," argued Marina.

"Wouldn't he? He ought to kill him and drag him along the ground."

"Good heavens, what absurd things you say," murmured the Goya. "And I am dying of impatience. Perhaps the Aragonese has not found Don Juan in."

"He would not yet have had time to return."

The Preacher had scarcely spoken when they heard the sound of horse's hoofs in the square. "Here he is," said the old man, and getting up, went out of the kitchen.

VII

Darkness is an oppression. Night is like a hand placed upon our soul.

—VICTOR HUGO, *L'Homme qui rit*.

THE trot of a horse came nearer. Presently a tall, strongly built man appeared at the door of the inn. "Good evening, everyone," he said; "greeting." By the light of the fire which burnt on the hearth one noticed neither the sightless eyes nor the marks of the smallpox on the Mayorazgo's face. He was wonderfully well-built, and wore as cloak a long kind of yellow cape made of fur, short breeches open at the knee, and a broad-brimmed hat.

"Where are the travellers?" he asked, advancing with a hesitating step.

"Shall I tell them you are here?" asked the Goya.

"No, it is not necessary. I intend a surprise for them," he added with a melancholy laugh.

"Come this way," said Blanca; and taking him by the hand, she led him to the door of the dining-room.

"Thanks, Blanca, thanks," murmured the Mayorazgo with emotion, and he pushed open the door and entered.

Exclamations were heard, apparently of gladness; and after that not the slightest sound. In the kitchen the ex-

pectation was great; and when the Aragonese appeared a few minutes later everyone wished to question him at the same time.

"Who read out the letter to Don Juan?" asked the Goya.

"I did."

"And what did it say?"

"That they were at the inn."

"Nothing more?"

"Nothing more."

"And what did the Mayorazgo do when he heard the news?"

"He seemed sad, very sad; passed his hand over his forehead and said: 'I am coming.'"

"And after that what did he do? Tell me everything."

"He went down the stairs alone very quickly, and himself saddled his horse. Before mounting he asked me: 'And how is Cesarea?'"

"I answered that she looked far from well, and then he murmured: 'Poor thing, poor thing,' several times. Then he mounted and set off at a terrific pace."

"What a good heart he must have!" exclaimed Blanca.

"Indeed he has," said the Preacher.

The hostess, nervous and impatient, approached the door of the dining-room and tried to glean a word here and there of the conversation going on within.

"They don't appear to be quarrelling," she said in a dis-

appointed voice; "they are talking as if nothing had happened."

"Do you think the Mayorazgo is preparing some trap for him?" inquired the Aragonese of the Preacher.

"Not he! He is much too good-hearted."

"He ought to say to him," cried the Goya in a romantic outburst: "'You are a villain; you are not a gentleman, nor anything'; and then challenge him to fight."

"What things you say," answered Blanca; "how can the poor Mayorazgo fight when he is blind?"

Presently steps were heard in the passage, and the Mayorazgo entered the inn-kitchen.

"Is the man who came to my house here?" he asked.

"Here I am, Don Juan," answered the Aragonese.

"Go back to my house and tell Quintín to bring, with the help of the son of Señora Candida, the sedan-chair which is in the hall."

"Very well."

"What, is Doña Cesarea worse?" asked the Goya.

"She feels very weak. The fatigue of the journey . . ."

"Does she require anything?" asked Blanca.

"No; she is dozing."

The Mayorazgo put out his arm, took a chair and sat down near the fire.

"Who is here?" he inquired.

"I am," said the Englishman; "Bothwell, the painter."

"Ah, the painter. And do you like our town as well as ever?"

"I do."

"You who must have seen such beautiful towns."

"None so beautiful as Labraz."

"Bah, he is mocking us; don't you think so, Goya?"

"I think he is, Señor Mayorazgo."

"No I am not."

"And do you paint much?"

"Yes, a great deal, but badly. When will you let me begin your portrait, Don Juan?"

"Whenever it suits you. But what a strange idea to insist on painting a man blind and unfortunate."

"In all Labraz there is nobody worth painting but you," answered the Englishman. "I have often thought whom I could paint and have passed under review all the men of the town: some remind me of a horse, others of a monkey or a dog; some, like the notary, show the movements of an ox; others resemble owls or parrots."

"And the women?" asked the Mayorazgo, smiling.

"With the women it is the same. Some of them resemble pet dogs; many have the face of a cat; but what I dislike most is the large number who have the face of a pig. Among all those I know, I make only one exception, and that is Blanca, the Goya's daughter, just as you are the only exception among the men. She has the face of a woman, you have the face of a man."

"Thank you in my name and hers. You are a fine jester, Mr. Bothwell."

"Sometimes I speak seriously. I cannot paint; neither can I lie."

"I do not accuse you of lying; but you may perhaps in your art be inclined to present what is characteristic of sorrow and misfortune."

"Certainly I am; but do you not think that all great painters have had the same inclination?"

"I do not know. I have never in my life seen any pictures except as a child and I cannot remember; but possibly the faces of those who suffer show more expression than the faces of those who are happy."

"Of course they do."

"In my own case I have felt a cleansing in me after sorrow and suffering, as for instance when I became blind. I perhaps do not express myself intelligibly."

"I think I understand you nevertheless."

"Many of my cavillings are the consequence of my lonely life; but certainly I think there are sorrows which are like windows thrown open for the soul. On the other hand there are others which are full of unuttered anger, hatred and low passions, and these can only corrupt. And often these vile dregs of corruption are far worse than the sorrow itself. I have always prayed God that if He sends me misfortunes He may give me a clean heart to endure them. To understand tribulation, analyse it and take its measure

is a beginning of comfort, just as to recognize and understand fear and take its measure is a beginning of courage."

The Mayorazgo spoke with perfect serenity: his sentences seemed addressed rather to himself than to his hearers. Presently he got up from his place by the fire and went back to the dining-room.

It was not long before the Aragonese reappeared with another man.

"Is that you, Quintín?" asked the Goya.

"Yes, Señora Gregoria. Please tell my master that we have brought what he asked for."

Blanca, Marina, and the Captain of the Keys went to the door to see what it was that they had brought. It was a small litter with ornaments of Baroque style which had formerly been golden but had been rendered black and dingy by time.

The Goya went into the dining-room, and presently Don Juan came out, giving his arm to Cesarea; behind them came Don Ramiro.

"Quintín, where are you? Bring the litter."

"O Juan," exclaimed Cesarea, sobbing.

"It is our grandfather's litter, don't you remember?"

"Oh, yes, Juan"; and she began to sob anew.

"Wrap yourself up well, Cesarea."

Blanca, who had assisted her to get into the litter, wrapped her feet up with friendly care.

"Juan, what about you?"

"We will form your escort."

The two servants placed themselves between the handles of the litter.

"One instant," said Don Ramiro; "I must get my hat and cloak: they are in the shop."

Don Ramiro passed along the passage and presently returned. At the door of the kitchen he paused to speak to Marina: "I have something to say to you."

"To me?"

"Yes, to you."

"Well, tell me."

"No, my dear: it must be when we are alone."

"Alone?" Marina asked in confusion.

The Goya came up to her daughter.

"We will speak of that to-morrow," said Don Ramiro in a different tone; and returning to the shop, he wrapped himself up and went out into the street. The servants took up the litter.

"And the lantern?" asked one of them. "Who will carry the lantern?"

"I will," said the Englishman; and seizing it, he placed himself at the head of the procession.

They crossed the square and might be seen going up a winding by-street steep and narrow, lit by an oil lamp which hung flickering before an image.

The Goya, disappointed by this dull ending, said that she could not understand the Mayorazgo's meekness. Blanca

several times expressed pity of Cesarea's lot. Marina remained wrapped in thought. The procession disappeared in the curving street above.

"Well, I," said the Aragonese, "think that Don Juan will not suffer the matter to rest there; he will try to revenge himself like a man."

But the Preacher, with a touch of bitter disdain, answered several times:

"Bah, he is much too good to do that."

BOOK II

DON RAMIRO

I

Deserted is my own good hall,
Its hearth is desolate.

—BYRON, *Childe Harold*.

TWO narrow streets led to the smaller square in which stood the ancestral house of Labraz. One of them ended in the town wall, beneath an arch with an image of Christ, which was lit at night by an oil lamp; the other passed along the apse of the Old Church, which bristled with gargoyles and corbels; they stood out beneath the buttresses and opened their mouths as if they were threatening to bite the walls opposite. This square was one of the least frequented parts of the deserted city. A priest occasionally or devout woman were the only persons who ever crossed the lonely square.

The windows and balconies of the Mayorazgo's house looked on to the southern side of the church; it had a fine Romanesque door, which had been daubed over and spoilt by absurd restoration; above it was a large bas-relief representing a bishop in the act of receiving presents from a king or emperor, consisting of the Gospels and two candlesticks.

The Old Church, as its name implied, was the oldest

church in the town. Its exterior was dark and lofty, with a square battlemented tower. It had three naves, apse, transept, and several side chapels. It dated, according to some authorities, from the time of Alfonso the Seventh; according to others, from that of St. Ferdinand. Its style was a mixture of Romanesque and Gothic in the lower part; of Gothic and Renaissance in the upper. In the Fifteenth Century, averred a chronicler of the town, Don Juan Manuel Alizaga, Labraz possessed eight parish churches; but as they were too many for the town, services were held only in the Old Church. This church was endowed with forty-eight benefices, but as the salaries were very small, those favoured were naturally men of limited education; according to the chronicler Alizaga, they were simple modest persons who spent their time gambling and drinking, courting and coursing. In view of this the rich and pious inhabitants of the town determined to unite the benefices of all the churches in a single collegiate church. They asked Pope Leo X to raise the church to this status; the Pope granted their request, and the collegiate church was duly inaugurated, with an abbot, a prior, precentor, treasurer, "schoolmaster," canons, prebendaries, lesser prebendaries and other dignitaries. Later the collegiate church became less prosperous and it could only support an abbot, two canons, eight honorary canons and six other dignitaries. This church having been raised to the status of a collegiate church, the inhabitants of Labraz built a new one; and on

one of its walls, on the epistle side, they hung an alligator, which for many years was the wonder and admiration of all the dwellers of the country round and a subject of discussion among the learned of Labraz, for nobody knew where that alligator had come from nor whether it had been brought there or had come to Labraz of its own accord; an important point which the author, since he has not sufficient scientific knowledge to settle it himself, must leave to more learned investigators.

One entered the Mayorazgo's house by a wide porch which ended in a large and somewhat gloomy court. Granite pillars supported a gallery round the court, which thus had the air of a cloister; the floor was paved with tiles and small stones forming patterns; in the centre was a well with an edge of stone roughly carved, and above, a framework of iron and a pulley, likewise rough and solid. The sides of the court were of hewn blocks of stone; their windows and balconies were ornamented in the Baroque style and finished off with large urns. A monumental staircase opposite the entrance went up to the rooms of the first floor which were situated round the court. Almost all these rooms were large, dark and scantily furnished. Some of the ceilings consisted of large beams which joined in the centre to form a noble design; others had been carved roughly into hollow squares, now worm-eaten. Ten or twelve rooms had been used on each floor in more prosperous days, some in winter, others in summer. Above

these floors was the library, the lofts and garrets; the top floor had not been opened for a very long time. All these rooms round the court showed signs of former prosperity: there were sconces of clear gleaming lights, carved chests, tapestries worked in high relief, and pictures of dark tones, from which vaguely stood out the emaciated features of saints.

Behind the house was the chapel and the garden, a not very large plot of ground which ended in the town wall. Two large vines covered the back of the house, and pushed up to the eaves; in summer they framed the windows in their green leaves, and at the beginning of autumn were loaded with purple bunches of black grapes. An ancient gallery, in former times of prosperity, had permitted the lords of Labraz to watch from their house the harvesting of their crops, since their land formerly lay along the town wall, beyond the moat. Finally, the dove-cot, set on the roof, stood as high as the bell-tower of the convent of Carmelite nuns. From the rooms looking north opposite the collegiate church one might hear of a morning the sound of an organ and the tinkling of a small bell.

From the neighbouring convent came the murmur of nuns praying the litany. All the right side of the house was uninhabited, and, wood being scarce, the windows had been blocked up. In the left wing and on the second floor lived Don Juan, Rosarito, Micaela, an old servant of Micaela and a few other servants. Don Juan occupied two rooms,

a bedroom and a study, both devoid of ornament; the only piece of furniture in the bedroom was a wooden bed, in the other room there was a table and a cupboard with account-books in which the steward entered the money received from the estate.

Micaela, who was fonder of luxury than was the Mayorazgo, had a drawing-room upholstered in blue, in which she would sit at her sewing or embroidery; it was in the part of the house which looked on to the town wall.

The room was furnished in Pompadour style. Ceiling and walls were adorned with intertwining branches in wooden relief, and there were pictures of shepherds and shepherdesses after the manner of Watteau. It communicated with a gallery in which there was a fountain: a heap of stones surmounted by a small image of the Virgin in alabaster.

Micaela's servant, an old and devout Basque, was always attending services extending over nine days or forty hours or held at night, and often left the lady and the girl alone in the ancient house. Micaela's life in Labraz was a lonely one. The servants said that she was very proud. Outside her own family her only friends were the Magistral of the Cathedral and the Señoras de Peralta. The Magistral ranked second among the dignitaries of the collegiate church; in the town he had the reputation of being a perfect well of learning, and as despite his profession he was given to gallantry and also interfered in the affairs of the

religious congregations, he visited all the ladies of the town.

In spite of his reputation he was a presumptuous fraud, puffed up and smacking of the comic actor: he would speak to ignorant peasants of things they could not understand, Virgil, Horace, the pagan gods, hypostases, thanatologies, instead of telling those mean and selfish folk plainly to be good, honest and generous.

Micaela's other friendship was one of those which are due rather to vanity than affection. Micaela was good-looking; the Peraltas, Segunda and Concha, were scraggy and ugly. Micaela had adorers, the Peraltas had no one to sigh for them. Undoubtedly the Peraltas hated Micaela; as for Micaela, she despised them; but they all pretended to an affection which they did not feel.

Of the family of Labraz there only remained a few relations who had seen better days and with whom Micaela held no intercourse, and Uncle Nazarito, who visited her occasionally. He was a very amiable old man, very timid and insignificant. He was one of those persons one may live with and yet scarcely realize their existence. He seemed to be asking pardon of everyone for having been born. He was very good, very clever and very friendly, and did not believe that anything or anyone could be evil. His hobby was botany, and his whole ambition was to make a collection of the flora of the province and leave it at his death to the Institute in the capital. At the thought that one day his collections would appear inscribed in his name under

a glass case he trembled with pleasure. The whole town gently laughed at Don Nazarito, and he was convinced that they were in the right. His appearance invited mockery: he was small and ugly and wore round spectacles; in winter he wore a tall hat and in summer a Panama hat, and his eyes were always fixed on the ground. He had never gone out of his house after seven in the evening; he was under the thumb of his housekeeper. Micaela stimulated Uncle Nazarito, but he did not dare to go often to the Mayorazgo's house for fear of annoying him.

Most part of the time Micaela spent alone in the house; and she then liked to go through the larger rooms, which were almost always dark. Occasionally a ray of sun would enter by one of the windows and light up the tarnished mirror of a pier-glass, like a skylight opened on a gloomy sky; it shone on the gilt candelabra, dissolved in rainbow hues on the crystal chandeliers and in the dark pictures brought out gloomy figures of noble mien. Or she would sit in the garden and spend the afternoon tending her flowers or reading a devout book under a rose-tree in flower, while Rosarito ran about and played.

Micaela only saw the Mayorazgo at meal-times. She treated him with great consideration as the head of the family, but showed him neither affection nor even pity for his misfortune. Micaela was cold and practical and above all had a great idea of herself and of the class to which she belonged. Any expression of feeling beyond a certain

point appeared to her vulgar, and without pretence or artifice she displayed in her gestures a patrician calm, a perfect ease born of her egoism and cold disposition. She was much admired and also much envied in the town. She affected not to notice either the admiration or the envy. At nightfall she would shut herself up in her room and on an eighteenth-century spinet play popular songs, hymns learnt at school and a few tunes of operas and music-hall plays that had made their way to Labraz. On Sundays she walked with the Peraltas in the avenues by the river while Rosarito, the Mayorazgo and a servant went into the vines planted in that bare and arid country-side, and the girl played with the blind man as if he were a little boy.

There were two menservants in the house and two women, all old; but a cripple also lived with them: the son of a washerwoman. His name was Mamerto and he was always called Mamertín. He was born without the use of his legs, and from the age of ten he went about in a little cart consisting of a plank on four wheels. He was very intelligent and extraordinarily malicious; he always did as much harm as possible and annoyed everybody. He went in his wheeled cart through the streets of Labraz, except the very hilly ones; but sometimes he would venture down the steepest descent, using the two sticks with which he propelled the cart and advancing at a great rate. In the pocket of his jacket he carried a small bottle and a

feather to oil the axles of his cart. Mamertín respected no one except Don Juan and Micaela. The latter indeed would not have allowed that paralytic buffoon to take any liberties.

One day Micaela, turning over and sorting things in the upper rooms, found in a closed case, wrapped up in cloths, a painted harp lavishly adorned. In the same box were some books yellow with time; there were French novels, *Matilde*, and Sir Walter Scott's *Rokeby* and *The lady of the Lake*, Lamartine's *Graziellta*, and other novels; the rest were devotional works with images and certificates of confession in their pages. Micaela had the harp brought down to her room, and read the novels. Despite her natural calm and aristocratic coldness, all that mass of languid love affairs and tender complaints made an impression on her, and her mind fell a prey to the poison of romanticism.

In her serene lack of passion and clear cold understanding of life, she considered that nothing of what she had read could occur under normal conditions of common monotony; but in spite of her coldness and intelligence she supposed, and in so doing left a loophole for the maddest acts, that under special circumstances those great passions might exist, and those heroes, who were tender-hearted as a girl in the presence of their lady-love and when faced by danger were fierce and brave as lions. She reasoned logically, moreover, that there might be social spheres in

which these strong passions could be more easily developed, as for instance at court and in luxurious villas; and she dreamed of love intrigues in splendid palaces.

In the fantastic paradise she created dreams of love mingled with dreams of ambition. The scene in which she and an imaginary he pledged themselves to eternal love was never a humble cottage nor the hut of the fisherman who sings the night away: it was always a park with sounding marble fountains or a drawing-room filled with pictures and carpets. All her fancies and enthusiasms were entirely intellectual. As time hung heavy, she resolved to learn to play the harp, but nobody in Labraz knew how to play this romantic instrument. Micaela spoke of her wish to the Magistral, and he promised to inform the organist of the collegiate church. The organist, Don Ignacio Armendariz, to whom the Magistral spoke on the subject, went at once to call on the Mayorazgo. This organist had a great wish to enter the house of the Labraz; he had an absorbing passion for old papers and documents, and had long been seeking some pretext to worm his way into Don Juan's library. The organist informed Micaela that his nephew Raimundo, one of the dignitaries of the collegiate church, was a true musician and would be able to instruct her, to begin with, at any rate. Micaela approved and one day after Vespers the organist brought his nephew to the house. Raimundo was a modest youth, pale and anæmic, wrapped in his cloak he seemed an effeminate copy of St. Louis Gonzaga. He

spoke timidly, being shy in Micaela's presence; she for her part scrutinized him with all the calmness of a strong-minded woman. He said that his uncle had placed him in a difficult position, because naturally the harp was an instrument completely unknown to him, as unknown as the drum or the dulcimer, but if his slight knowledge of music could be of use to her he was entirely at her service.

The first lessons were very wearisome, they consisted of scales and more scales until they were played perfectly. Micaela had a strong will and persevered. The priest used to prepare and copy out the lessons and then accompany Micaela on the piano. Meanwhile the organist had discovered the way to the library and had installed himself therein. He persuaded the Mayorazgo that it was essential to set his books and manuscripts in order, and every afternoon he went to the library to read and examine papers, which was his ruling passion. Having attained his wish, he thought of nothing else. The lessons went on, and Micaela with the help of her professor made some progress. One day, looking through a curtain, she saw the priest pick up a handkerchief which she had forgotten on a small table and hurriedly put it in his pocket.

"Is he in love with me?" she wondered. She pretended to have noticed nothing and watched him carefully. Raimundo was evidently madly in love with her; when he sat at the piano he cast ecstatic looks at her, but out of timidity and respect said nothing. This intense and intensely

restrained passion gave Micaela intimate pleasure. Sometimes when she went on to the balcony she saw the dark figure of the priest cross the square: he would look up timidly to the windows of the house and then enter the archway leading to the town wall and disappear.

II

When the bell from the church-tower
Tells you it is holy day,
With a friend to keep you gay
Rapidly a Mass you hear.

—MORETO, *La ocasión hace el ladrón.*

THE arrival of Don Ramiro and Cesarea changed things in the Mayorazgo's house. Cesarea was in weak health and only went out into the garden with Rosarito and Don Juan. Don Ramiro, whom quiet did not suit, organized expeditions with Mr. Bothwell, was always on the move, paid visits to the Goya's inn, played cards, and soon after his arrival felt himself bored by the life of the place. The second Sunday after their arrival Micaela, Don Juan and Don Ramiro went to High Mass. The three went out together and entered the winding street that passed round the Romanic apse of the Old Church. The light fell from a narrow slit between the roofs and after slanting across the warped and bulging walls of the houses and the sculpture on the Cyclopean exterior of the apse, rested dimly on the damp pavement. On the balconies of wrought iron a few dishevelled women looked down to gaze at the two men and Micaela, who walked between them holding up her skirt. Micaela was

well dressed and beautiful. Beneath her black dress showed the lines of her swelling breast; in the dark lace of her mantilla her complexion seemed whiter and her hair lighter; her graceful figure and rounded thighs swayed as she walked.

The contrast between Don Juan and Don Ramiro was so marked that it struck everyone. Don Juan was badly dressed and out of the fashion; he walked hesitatingly, his face was sad and he seemed an old man; whereas Don Ramiro was all youth and presumption. He wore a close-fitting green tail-coat, an embroidered waistcoat, narrow trousers, patent-leather boots, and his collar was so high that he had to keep his head stiffly raised. He wore yellow gloves, and his right hand trifled with a cane. When they entered the court of the collegiate church a few peasant-men and women came up to them to examine them with curiosity. Micaela joined a group of ladies, among whom were those of Peralta and Beamonte. Don Ramiro bowed to them and remained by the side of the Mayorazgo. Children were running up and down on the flags of the court, on which the old epitaphs were half worn away. Peasant-women, wrapped in their patterned shawls, went by quickly, the wide circle of their skirts balancing as they went; the peasants in their shirt-sleeves stood in groups discussing the prospects of the coming harvest.

A huckster's many-coloured rosaries hung trembling in the sun against the church's wall of massive hewn stone,

and the peasant-girls gazed at them in rows holding one another by the hand.

Micaela's friends praised Don Ramiro's elegance. She looked furtively at her brother-in-law, and their eyes met. All these well-dressed people now entered the church, and Don Ramiro stepped forward to hold up the heavy curtain for them to pass. A puff of cold air thick with incense came from the interior. After the sunshine outside one could see scarcely anything but the lights of the altar and the forms of the faithful kneeling in the dark nave. Almost feeling their way under Don Juan's guidance they crossed to one of the side chapels. Besides the altar-lights one could see a number of wax candles burning on the floor, placed there by women who knelt in the spacious nave. The men were near the chancel or in the choir. Every person had his own place in the church, corresponding to the ancient burial-place of his family; the family of Labraz heard Mass from their chapel, which was one of the side chapels opposite the font. This chapel was founded by a Labraz in the sixteenth century: he with other hidalgos of the town had borne the expense of the new church, as one might read in an inscription in Gothic lettering which ran like a golden moulding along the four sides of the chapel.

On the arrival of the Mayorazgo and his companions the caretaker of the church opened the iron screen of the chapel, and took from a chest an embroidered cushion which she placed on a faldstool for Doña Micaela to kneel

on. Don Ramiro began to watch Micaela; her movements displayed an exquisite calmness and elegance. She was one of those who, by reason of a deep feeling of pride and dignity, unconsciously betray a harmony in all their movements and gestures. What a difference between her and the peasant-women; she excelled everyone in simplicity and grace.

Don Ramiro, who had not the remotest thought of taking part in the service, then began to examine the church. One could see the high altar through the ornamented bars of the iron screen. Through the only window of the chapel, covered by a thick blue curtain, came a faint light which shed a blue dimness over everything. Carved clusters of twisted acanthus-flowers could be distinguished in the reredos, and from the dark background of the painted wood stood out the golden aureoles above the figures, like a constellation of dim suns. One could hear muttered prayers, whispered conversations, the rustle of skirts, the sound of coughing, and every now and then the creaking of a side door opening and shutting, while a ray of light shot through it and plunged into the mysterious darkness of the nave.

Between the pillars of the chancel the high altar gleamed in the light of its rows of candles. Someone drew a curtain, and a slanting many-hued light pierced the dense air of the nave; it lit up the silver screen of the chancel and fell on the triple altar-cloth, dappling it with green and red, purple and sapphire. The organ played a solemn

march, and the acolytes in white and red appeared in the chancel, carrying tall candles, and the priests advanced in their pleated albs reddened by the light of the torches. The deacon and the subdeacon, wearing dalmatics, followed, and between them went a tremulous old man who almost disappeared beneath the ample folds of a magnificent pluvial cape gleaming with precious stones. The celebrant and his two assistants walked together, the latter holding up the hem of the pluvial cape; and when they came to the lowest step of the altar the old man went forward to the altar and blessed it.

At that moment Micaela saw two girls approach the side chapel and kneel down on a grave. They were Blanca and Marina. Micaela knew them from seeing them there every Sunday. As one of the girls sat down, Micaela thought she caught a look of intelligence between her and Don Ramiro.

"Do they know one another?" she wondered, and, pretending to pray, she watched the girl. The one who had looked was brown and graceful, with flashing eyes. The Mass began, and Micaela did not see her look again.

A confused murmur spread through the church; the crowd swayed for an instant, there was a sound of chairs being moved and a mutter of prayer. The subdeacon meanwhile was assisting the celebrant to doff the pluvial cape and the deacon was arraying him in the chasuble. The old man then approached the altar and with a quavering

voice began the Mass. The choir answered with a formidable "Amen," followed by notes of the organ. The church trembled from base to keystone, and from its pointed arches cast a tempest of sound over the kneeling multitude, bowing before the wrath of God the Avenger.

"It is he who is playing the organ to-day," thought Micaela. She looked across to the chancel-seats where Raimundo sat on Sundays; he was not there. The ceremony continued. The officiating clergy passed backwards and forwards in a row before the altar, and inclined their tonsured heads in unison and bowed and bent their knees. Their chasubles glanced in a ray of sunshine, and when the priests knelt, their vestments of thread of gold broke into stiff and rigid folds like the coarse stuffs painted in primitive altar-pieces. The censers, swinging ceaselessly, sent forth thick puffs of scented smoke which whirled up through the air and took on a thousand changing tints as they ascended to the ceiling of the cupola.

Micaela caught another look exchanged between the girl of the black eyes and Don Ramiro. "Can they know one another?" she asked herself; and she turned her bowed head to look at Don Ramiro. Through her fingers she saw that his attitude had nothing mystic about it but was rather that of a conquering Don Juan, with the thumb of his right hand placed in his waistcoat pocket. "The fatuous fool," she said, and compared him with the Mayorazgo, who was kneeling with head bowed in prayer.

The bell rang to announce the preface of the Mass. Micaela closed her eyes. The priest recited the prayer, intoning its final sentences. The voices of the choir were hushed and when the organ began to play there was not the slightest sound to be heard anywhere. The organ sobbed out its lowest notes, and its music was no song of sorrow to accompany the sacrifice of the Mass, it did not die away at the altar in the hands of the celebrant: it went straight to Micaela, who in those notes heard the murmured complaint of a soul hungering after love and filled with desires. Suddenly the sorrowful notes ceased, and a strong chant of triumph rose powerfully on the air. Micaela opened her eyes. The church was full of a white mist of incense pierced by a ray of sunshine like a bar of gold. The organ had ceased playing.

Souls have sympathies which are conveyed by sound, says William Cowper in "The Task." Raimundo's music dominated Micaela, but as soon as she ceased to hear it she forgot it and it dominated her no longer.

Micaela, the Mayorazgo and Don Ramiro left the church. In the court the sun was shining merrily. The seller of rosaries was crying his wares in a loud voice. Micaela passed in front of some beggar-women crouching in the sun, and as she did so one of them raised her face, with its hooked nose and sunken mouth, and seeing her and Don Ramiro together, exclaimed: "What a lovely lady, and what a fine pair they would have made!"

Don Ramiro let a coin fall in the old woman's wrinkled claw. Micaela looked at him in amazement, and they went out of the square. From the open window-screens on the ground-floor of the nitrous wall of the church came air as from a cellar, heavy with the smell of mouldiness: it swayed the spider-webs hung between the bars which were rusty and crumbling like sticks of cinnamon. At the corner of a by-street Micaela saw that a figure in black was following them afar off.

III

The girl's red cheek
Is turning pale:
The future years
Make her heart quail.

—*Old Song.*

"WELL, are you not coming with us to serenade the girls?" asked Antonio Bengoa of Don Ramiro.

"Yes, with great pleasure."

"Mr. Bothwell is coming too?" asked the youth of the Englishman.

"Of course: I wouldn't miss it for anything."

"Good; then come along with me to our meeting-place."

They went through by-street after by-street, and in a winding narrow street called the Calle de la Pellejería they paused. They knocked at a door and passed into a large porch lit by a small lamp and filled with a cobbler's implements. At first, owing to the smoke coming from the chimney, one could see nothing in the room; then Don Ramiro and the Englishman saw eight or nine youths, for the most part dressed in black and with the faces of bull-fighters. The master of the house, a tall stout man of brutal aspect, gave a rough greeting to the Englishman and Don Ramiro and offered them brandy and biscuits.

"Thank you very much," said the Englishman.

"In my country one does not answer with thanks," said the master of the house.

"With what then?"

"With blows."

They all laughed, and Antonio Bengoa introduced his young friends to Don Ramiro and the Englishman; some of them were studying for the priesthood and were known as semi-priests: they studied at the seminary at Pamplona and were now on vacation; the rest belonged to Labraz. They all shook hands. More youths arrived, and when they were all assembled the cobbler had a last drink and they formed into groups of four and received their musical instruments. The musicians numbered twelve: the first four carried fiddles, the eight others guitars, small and large. To those who had no musical instrument the cobbler gave a club. "If the night-watchmen come, at them!" he warned them laconically.

In front, as if to lead the way, went four of the semi-priests; one of them especially seemed the conductor; it was he who sang, and in his hand he carried a wand. Some flung the fold of their cape across their breast, others wrapped themselves in their scarfs and plaids; the foremost one gave the signal with his wand, and to the music of a quick march the serenading party set out. They went along winding cobbled side-streets; the houses loomed up on either side, dark and gloomy, without a single light;

above, the pale moon shone down on the town and the notes of the fiddles and guitars echoed with a savage din in the silent night. In some narrow streets they were obliged to go in single file; in these dark passages there were images of saints under glass, with their small lantern in front and their wreath of withered flowers. On arriving before the Mayorazgo's house they formed a circle and started off with the *jota* of Navarre, and the semi-priest who conducted the music began to sing with a powerful voice. He sang two *jotas*. The party went on its way, and stopped beneath the closed shutters of the convent, and the singer, taking off his cap, shouted: "Here's to the Mother Superior and all the pretty nuns!" And he threw his cap into the air like a bullfighter.

He sang a love song, and when he had finished they struck up the quick march and began to descend in close order to the principal square.

In front of the Goya's house there was further scraping of guitars and more singing. One of the balcony-windows opened and in the dim light of the moon the outline of a woman could be seen.

"I am going to say good night to my lady love," said Antonio Bengoa, and putting his arms and legs round a pillar, he climbed to its top and with one hand seized one of the balcony's iron bars and drew himself up by his hands. He got on to the balcony, rapped with his knuckles at the window-pane and shouted: "Good night, Blanca."

Then he slid down the pillar to the ground.

The serenading party proceeded on its way and the square was left in silence.

Blanca had not yet gone to bed. She was writing to her fiancé in the drawing-room. This was a small low room with walls painted blue and curtains about the balcony. There was an ordinary sofa and several chairs with seats of straw. Above the sofa hung a looking-glass covered with gauze, and on the walls coloured lithographs represented romantic episodes in the life of Malek Adel and Matilde in the novel by Madame Cottin. Opposite the sofa a rounded mahogany wardrobe occupied nearly one-half of the room and above it an Infant Jesus, with a metal ball in his hand, smiled from his glass case. Blanca ceased writing when she heard the music, and listened breathlessly to the verses which the young men sang to her and to her sister. She was about to resume her writing when she heard suppressed sobs coming from Marina's room.

"What can it be?" she murmured; "she must be dreaming."

She went to the bedroom on tiptoe and heard Marina move restlessly and apparently keep back a sob.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Nothing," answered Marina dryly.

Blanca took the lamp and entered her sister's room. Marina was sitting up in bed dishevelled, with a deep expression of grief and sorrow on her face; her eyes were

reddened with crying, and her mouth was contracted in bitter trouble.

“But what is it, Marina?”

“Nothing,” she answered again, in a voice broken by sobs.

Blanca looked at her in astonishment and sorrow, and then embraced her and made her lay her head against her breast. Then Marina’s grief found relief in a flood of tears. Blanca did not put any questions to her until she saw that she was calmer. The elder sister felt terribly anxious; she guessed what the matter was, she supposed that the cause of that grief was Don Ramiro. His frequent visits to the house and their sudden cessation all pointed to the same inference. Could Marina . . . ? That was what horrified Blanca. And with a married man too! It would be worse than death. She had thought that it was but a flirtation on Marina’s part, but it must be something more; this weeping proved as much. She had noticed that Marina was wrapped in thought and kept to herself and several times she had come upon her in tears; but as the girl was so sentimental and romantic she did not take this very seriously.

Had Marina . . . ? Blanca thought of two or three girls whose history she knew. The conduct of the town towards them had been so cruel that life became impossible for them there. The men considered them fair prey, and sent them messages by the Cañamera and the Zenona, who were the two Celestinas of Labraz; the children insulted

them. It was the vile and cowardly spirit of all priest-ridden towns. And was her sister, so gay and pretty, going to be despised in the same way? thought the horrified Blanca. When Marina had grown calmer, Blanca said: "Come, tell me all about it." Marina in a broken voice told her that for some time she had spoken with Don Ramiro at the window looking on to the Calle de Jesus, by night, and had written and received letters. Then Don Ramiro had asked her to open the door one night and she had not dared to do so. A few nights afterwards he made the same request, and Marina made up her mind to open.

"And you did?" asked Blanca.

"Yes, but it happened that the Preacher had not yet gone to bed, and hearing our steps, he came out into the porch."

"And he saw Don Ramiro?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

"The Preacher took Don Ramiro by the arm, accompanied him to the door, and he has never come back."

"Never?"

"Never."

Blanca gave a sigh of relief; Marina also sighed, but it was in sorrow.

"But what did you expect of that man?" asked Blanca. "Did you not know that he is married?"

"I loved him, and I love him," murmured Marina.

And to her sister's remarks she answered that she loved

him, and that she would undergo every insult and humiliation for his sake. She had already undergone something, for the Cañamera, that repulsive woman, thinking her lost, had already sent her a message. Marina, as she said this, began once more to sob bitterly, and Blanca kissed her in tears.

IV

'Twas in the month of May, in the glory of the spring,
When their sweetest lays of love the birds together sing.

THE winter went over with its rains and mists. Cesarea, Don Ramiro's wife, was no better; the doctor gave little hope of her recovery; he prophesied that she would last but to when the leaf of the fig-tree had grown to the size of a bat's wing. Don Ramiro had spent days and days shut up in the house, walking up and down like a caged lion. When the fine weather began he would go out shooting and return with his dogs through the streets of the town. He had a will which imposed itself, and he drew everyone into his plans for feasts and expeditions. On one of the first days of May they decided to go to see the ancient monastery near Labraz; the party was to consist of Mr. Bothwell, the organist and his nephew Raimundo, Don Juan Manuel de Antoñona, whose hobby was archæology, and Don Ramiro. The latter persuaded Micaela to accompany them, and provided a gentle mare for her to ride. So Micaela riding and the rest on foot, they set out for the ancient convent. It was distant about four leagues from Labraz and lay in a valley surrounded by mountains.

They started early before the dawn. At first they occa-

sionally met carts drawn by a long file of mules. After leaving the level country and getting to the wilder parts, the scenery was delightful. There was a mist, and the trees and a few houses by the roadside showed indistinctly; but suddenly the sun appeared, the sky became blue, and floods of light shone everywhere. The river murmured close by in its green setting; the birds sang in the branches.

The monastery was large and deserted. It was looked after by a little old man, formerly caretaker of the convent when the Carthusians were still there. They entered the convent through a court which had a large stone cross in its centre and a fountain at the side. From this court one passed through an arch to another which was paved with small stones among which the bones of cows had been inserted to form a pattern. The old caretaker had prepared luncheon for them, and they all sat down to the meal. The expedition had made Micaela gayer and more animated than usual; the country air had faintly suffused her cheeks with red. While they ate, the old caretaker began to tell them about the life of the friars. It was a monotonous account of their food and their walks, told with a wealth of insignificant detail.

"So they fared ill?" asked Don Ramiro.

The old man winked: "I would like to live as they did."

"And eat nothing but stockfish?"

"The stockfish that they ate you might well have eaten."

"It was good?"

"De profundis clamavit."

They all laughed, except the priest, who must have considered this a trifle irreverent.

Don Juan Manuel Antoñona then told them of the barbarous conduct of the French in this place.

"They broke down the doors," he said, "with the butts of their rifles and burnt them; they forced open the cupboards, stole the altar-cloths, chasubles and albs, stamped the Host underfoot, took the altar-stones from the altars, stabled their horses in the church and watered them at the holy-water basins. I have read an account by one of the friars, who was an eyewitness of these outrages and profanations. While some of the soldiers played the organ, beating and thumping it till it was broken in pieces, the rest rode about the church. Between the hoofs of the horses were dragged chasubles tied by the girdle to their tails; the processional crosses, the censers and the sacred vessels were kicked about. The officers drank from the chalices and vessels used for Extreme Unction; the soldiers took down the altar-pieces, undressed the images and threw them on the ground, using the pedestals as mangers; they broke the monstanced in pieces and even broke open recent graves."

"Another of their barbarous acts," said the organist in a merry tone, "was to steal the chest containing the bones and other relics of St. Prudencius. The friars kept praying for the sacrilegious French as they watched them march off, be-

cause they realized that the saint would do something terrible to such heretics; but to their amazement the saint did nothing at all. One of the friars who was not convinced of the power of the relics attempted to dissuade them from taking away the chest; but they tied a rope to his neck and took him with them as far as Labraz. That does not prevent the relics, now in the collegiate church, from being considered as miraculous as ever."

"Will you be silent, Uncle," said Raimundo; "if not for me, for Doña Micaela!"

"No, let him speak; there is no one to hear us here."

"Worse things were done in the convent of Franciscan nuns," said the organist.

"What was that, Don Ignacio?" asked Micaela with a smile.

"Only that the French entered the convent and set to work with a will: they tore the standard of the Conception into shreds, took down the altar-pieces, tore up everything. The accursed heretics had taken all the cells by assault when the old abbess, who was over sixty, with the moustache of a carabineer, went up to one of the French regiment of pioneers, ■ tall light-haired man, and placing her hand on her breast in her thirst for martyrdom, exclaimed: 'Moa, moa also nun.'"

Raimundo gave a frightened look at Micaela; but Micaela, at sight of the organist accompanying his words with mimic action, was laughing out loud. Don Ramiro

observed Micaela attentively. They finished their luncheon and went into the court with the fountain, and then, by a kind of dark passage with an image in the wall, passed to a third court paved with great slabs. In this court was the church. It had a large porch, with a bench of glazed tiles at either side, and on the wall the portraits of the seven founders of the convent in high relief. The door of the church, as Antoñona pointed out, was Gothic, but in a style at once rough and decadent; scenes of the Passion were sculptured on it, the figures being painted in blue and red, and standing out from this sculpture was the image of the Virgin with the dead Christ in her arms. Above these two figures in a Greek fret ran the words "*Videte si est dolor sicut dolor meus*" (Was ever grief like mine?). The church was large and had a fine altar-piece of burnished gold and a canopied niche some ten yards in height which, as Armendariz said, was the ugliest and most in-artistic device that a friar's brain could invent. "Look," he added, "at those pillars which seem made of lard, and that other darker stone must be chocolate; I can never look at it fasting, it has such an air of edible stuff that it makes me hungry."

"Shall we go and play the organ?" suggested Don Ramiro.

"Yes, let us."

Antoñona preferred to go and look at the library. The rest mounted by a stairway till they reached the choir. It

was an old organ daubed with many colours; its keys were yellow and some of them had been mended with wire. The bellows were moved by means of a very heavy wooden lever. Don Ramiro attempted to move it in vain; the organist went to his assistance and between them they succeeded in raising the upper part of the bellows, on which lay two large stones.

"Do you play something, Micaela," said the organist.

"But I cannot manage those things," she said, pointing to the registers.

"Raimundo will do it for you."

Micaela took her place on the stool and began to play a melancholy romance from Flotow's *Marta*. Raimundo changed the registers for her and the notes rose in the air romantically sad.

"Excellent," said the organist and Don Ramiro when she ended.

"Now you play," said the organist to his nephew.

Micaela rose and gave her place to the little priest. He sat down but immediately got up again; the fact that Micaela had just been sitting there had struck home to his lover's heart.

"Why, what's the matter?" asked his uncle.

"Nothing, nothing," said the priest, blushing; "I felt a trifle faint. What shall I play you?"

"Something of your own," said the organist.

"Very well."

The priest sat down to the organ. His left hand on the lowest bass notes began the prelude of a melody which died away immediately; his right swept lightly over the keys; and both darted out rapidly to open and close the registers. Suddenly it seemed that a mighty force began to fill the organ with a swelling volume of sound; it roared and sighed as though it longed to hurl itself into an abyss contained within itself. The arpeggios, isolated and gleaming like pearls set in a necklace forming the solemn rhythm of the accompaniment, fell in still more ample, rounder curves of sound. The same phrase took on new colour, shone in various hues and died away in a wail and reappeared; sometimes it would hide itself modestly and become like water rustling through grass and dead leaves; sometimes it would laugh clearly like the water flowing from solitary fountains.

Micaela listened with emotion, her eyes fixed on the priest's hands, which rushed in mad pursuit over the yellowed ivory of the keys. Suddenly a tempest of solemn chords sounded in the very heart of the organ. The tremolos cried out and rose one over the other as in a wild desire to overtake the melody which dominated them; Raimundo's left hand fell on the dark notes and trembled above them till they were captured, and the serene ideal melody rose into clear regions like an eagle in the blue and circled in immense spirals above the tempestuous sounds of earth. Higher and higher rose the voice, clearer and

clearer; then suddenly it hesitated and like a wounded bird sank and disappeared in a whirlwind of low notes.

"Bravo, admirable!" exclaimed Don Ramiro in the greatest astonishment.

The organ was sighing wearily.

The priest, smiling timidly, looked at Micaela. At that instant she was his; for she was still dominated by that potent music.

"Play something else," said Don Ramiro.

"No, no; no more," murmured Micaela; "let us go on."

They came down from the choir, and entered the refectory with its great walnut chairs. The private rooms of the friars proved interesting. The cells were spacious, consisting of two stories, ■ large fire-place and a garden with a gallery running along either side. All the cells looked on to a cloister, and the cloister-garden served as ■ cemetery.

Life there must have been excellent, tranquil and full of charm. A light wind gently moved the leaves of the trees, birds were singing.

At nightfall they all returned to Labraz.

V

In fine I perceived that all were egoists, although when satisfied they showed their spots a little less, like the full moon.

—J. P. RICHTER, *Titan*.

MR. BOTHWELL CRAWFORD, or Bothwell Crawford, Esq., made it his amusement to astonish the town by his fanciful behaviour. He did so partly from a natural inclination to all that was rare and extravagant and partly in opposition to the prejudices of the townsfolk. He was eccentric in his dress. He delighted in loud checks and suits with large lines; sometimes he went down to the river a-fishing in leg-gings and a top-hat, although usually he wore a small cap adorned with several eagle's feathers. His favourite place was in a crooked tree which bent forward over the river; he would sit down there in one of its branches, take out his fishing-rod and fix it in the tree, then take a book and read. As he read he used to laugh out loud, and sometimes to calm himself he would undress and plunge into the river. He made absurd plans to exploit mines and waterfalls; everyone laughed at his plans, but he did not mind. Some people said that the Englishman was of a resolute disposition, and he demonstrated this in such wise that thenceforth nobody could doubt his courage. In the upper part

of the town there was a gaming-house run by a scoundrel who after wandering aimlessly about had come to the town and married the widow of a pastry-cook, who was also loved by a canon. To this house some of the aristocrats of Labraz were wont to go to play cards, and there they talked and gossiped and retailed all the stories and scandal of the town. The Englishman used to go there very rarely. Since Don Ramiro's arrival he was very often the subject of their conversation, as was the case on one of the afternoons when the Englishman happened to be there. The owner of this corner of tattle, a fair-haired, sickly individual, easily angered, was explaining the reason of Don Ramiro's flight from Madrid as he had himself heard it. It seems, he said, that Don Ramiro had a friend who was a revolutionary, an old man. This old man had been foolish enough to marry a pretty girl who was very gay and a great coquette. He made the mistake to attempt to guard his wife too carefully, and as he was ill-tempered and jealous he made her a scene for the merest trifle. He had made Don Ramiro's acquaintance at a Masonic lodge and had come to place such confidence in him that he raised no objection to his coming to his house and staying with his wife when he was away from home. Some revolutionary affair occurred which obliged the old man to leave Madrid in fear of the police. Before going he wrote a letter to Don Ramiro asking him not to neglect his wife, and, added the owner of the gaming-house sarcastically, Don Ramiro neglected her so

little that he won her body and soul and sold all her furniture. After some months the old man returned to Madrid, supped with some friends who had gone to meet him and who suggested that he should accompany them to the house of ■ Cañamera of the place. The old man refused, but his friends carried him with them against his will. They entered a room; an old woman presented several women to them, and after a few minutes' conversation the old woman spoke to the revolutionary of a beautiful young woman recently married and said that she would go to fetch her. She did so: a woman entered and the old man gave a fearful cry and threw himself upon her; the recently married woman was his wife. Don Ramiro had taken her to this house and sold her for a few pounds.

"The Devil!" said one of the players. "What a man!"

"Didn't the old man try to kill him?" asked another.

"Yes, he challenged him to fight," answered the owner of the gaming-house; "and do you know what happened? A day or two later they proceeded with their seconds to Monteleon, and Don Ramiro put a bullet through the old man's brain. That is why he had to flee."

A series of exclamations followed.

"Perhaps he will do the same with the Goya's daughter as with the old man's wife," said one of the players.

"What daughter?" asked the Englishman.

"Marina. He goes to the house of nights."

"If he confines himself to one of them!"

"Very possibly he will take both."

"It runs in the family."

Mr. Bothwell stayed to hear no more. He left the gambling-house and went to the inn, went up to his room and called Blanca.

"This is what I have heard," he said; "I do not believe it," he added coldly, "but I must know the truth." Blanca, in tears of dismay, told him Marina's story.

"Very good," murmured the Englishman; "I will see how I can settle the matter."

He opened his trunk, took out two pistols, loaded them, and returned to the gambling-house. Don Ramiro had not yet arrived, and he waited till he came. On seeing him enter, he went up to him: "Do you know, Don Ramiro, that they were speaking ill of you here just now?"

"Were they?" asked Don Ramiro, smiling, in expectation of some eccentric sally on the part of the Englishman.

"Yes."

"And what were they saying?"

"Many things, some of which don't concern me but others do."

"And what were the things that concerned you, Mr. Bothwell?"

"This, for instance: they said that you went at night to the house of the Goya and were the lover of one of her daughters."

"And that concerned you, Mister?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because I know that it is not true."

"Did she tell you so?"

"No; I was told by someone who when you tried to enter the house turned you out into the street."

Don Ramiro turned pale, got up and said: "Do you wish to insult me, Sir?"

"I wish to ask you to confess that what has been said here about the girl is false."

"Are you tired of your life, Mister?"

"Not in the least."

"Well, you are laying yourself open to have a bullet put through your brain, if you have any."

"Well, we would see. I am not a bad marksman. I am cool and my sight is good. Look now, that light." And Bothwell took out his pistol, and put out the light with one shot. There was a great uproar in the room. "With a good pistol," added the Englishman calmly, "I hit the mark ten times out of ten."

Don Ramiro turned intensely pale; the owner of the gaming-house and two others approached the Englishman knife in hand; but he kept them at a distance and one of them he shot through the hand.

"Let it be understood that what this gentleman said is a lie. Good-bye."

And he went out into the street. The Englishman's action

caused great stupefaction in the town; they could not understand such quixotism. The inhabitants of Labraz considered themselves chivalrous; but what need was there to defend the daughter of an innkeeper? It seemed to them the height of absurdity. Only a few, among them Antonio Bengoa and Perico, defended Bothwell through thick and thin. The scandal had advantages for the daughters of the Goya; for the Englishman's pistols and his calm courage inspired those bullies with the knives with trembling fear. A month or so afterwards Bothwell left the house of the Goya and hired a house for himself.

Being a priest-ridden town, Labraz was vicious, but in an underhand sinister way. There were two Celestinas, with customers among the rich and clerical elements. They were both old; one was called the Cañamera, a repulsive woman, short and fat, dressed in black. She had several girls in her house and exploited them miserably. She knew that in all the world these unfortunate women would find no protection, and she treated them worse than animals. The other was called Zenona, and her affairs were of a more private character. Both pursued any girl who was beset by temptation and, like carrion crows, at once fell upon her. Straightway the honourable inhabitants, the judge who decided lawsuits according to the recommendations he received, the notary who plundered the conscience and property of other people, the usurers who lent money at sixty per cent: in fine, all the honest folk formed a kind of wall

so that the air might not be contaminated by the lost sheep, who was not suffered to go to church nor out for a walk nor appear in the street, for if she did she was immediately taken to prison. Meanwhile priests and women came to certain understandings, and no one said a single word. It was discussed whether the children of the carpenter, in whose house the canon lodged, bore greater resemblance to the canon than to their legitimate father, but such suspicions entailed no dishonour; at most the husband received certain sarcastic looks. It was curious that the priests who fostered prostitution in private declared war on it publicly. Once when the Cañamera was dangerously ill, the priest who went to confess her made her promise that she would definitively give up her profession. When she got well, the woman did not fulfil her promise, and when the chapter in a body summoned her to do so, she said that she would fix on her door a list of all the priests who frequented her house. The matter was dropped for fear of a scandal and the Cañamera continued as before.

An unconscious hypocrisy prevailed in Labraz; those priests and wealthy persons failed to realize their hypocrisy. Like the bullies who occasionally receive a thrashing and are convinced of their own courage, those good gentlemen who might count on the fingers of both hands, that there be no mistake, the villainous actions which they performed in the course of one day, were convinced that they were good, chivalrous and virtuous. Not even among the youths was

there any sign of generosity. They were quite as dead as the old men; the young man who had an income of some fifty pounds gave up work. When occasion offered, a priest would find him a girl to marry about as rich as himself, and though she might be as ugly as the Devil he would be satisfied. This was the perfect life for an inhabitant of Labraz: that the wife should bring up her children while the husband, beating his breast and making signs of the cross, frequented the house of the Cañamera. As the townsfolk neither read nor thought, all their energies were of the vegetative order. Their only moral occupation was to denounce one another and bring lawsuits. The brutal instincts which were half restrained by the fear of Hell and half excited by that loophole which hypocrisy affords to every vice, had rendered the inhabitants of Labraz marvelously ferocious. During public festivals this ferocity found an outlet in the bullfights: Labraz outshone the most savage towns of the whole of Spain, the towns in which the bullfights are most abject and cowardly. The young men, gentlemen and clowns, placed themselves behind the barricade, and when the bull passed near them they would prick it, beat it over the muzzle, knock out one of its eyes if they could and finally when an old bull or a cow was let into the arena, they would act as bullfighters and throw themselves upon it, holding it down and stabbing it with their knives until it was a mere mangled mass. After that they danced the *jota*, which is stupidity and

ferocity converted into a tune; they drank a great deal, and retired to their houses to pray. The most dissolute inhabitants, when Holy Week came round, put on their penitential robes and walked in the procession. One may have faults, and be a Christian for all that! Besides being ferocious these brutal folk were lazy and completely useless. The rich played at cards, went out walking and shot quails and partridges; the poor brutified themselves with work and got drunk from time to time. The better sort were thralls of routine, and considered new ideas and new plans anathema. The life of Labraz was by no means based in sensuality, quite the reverse: the sentiments on which existence there turned were of a metaphysical order: honour, religion, country. But above all these was money. In Labraz an enriched usurer was held in vastly more esteem than a ruined nobleman. A single occurrence paints the town. Once during Holy Week, while the procession was going through the streets, a strolling gipsy with a monkey arrived and begged for alms. He avoided the streets through which the procession passed, and made the monkey dance to the sound of a drum. Suddenly the sky became overcast and presently it began to rain. The people, those who were returning in the robes with which they had played a part in the procession, those who had carried the canopy, the standards and the image on its platform, were of opinion that the gipsy's ape was responsible for the rain. A canon, with the face of a pig, said that for the gipsy to have gone

about the streets on that day was in very truth an insult to the Divine Majesty, and forthwith all those bullies of the procession hurled themselves on the monkey and stabbed it all over. The gipsy ran away and was pursued with stones till he was lost to sight. All these things Perico, the Liberal of the town, explained by the following poem, which he had probably invented:

In Labraz you must not expect
Many Liberals to collect,
Labraz where nine of ten at least
Are sons of canon, monk or priest.

VI

I am a fool
To weep at what I am glad of.

—SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest*.

THIS was a strange period in Don Ramiro's life. He gave up going out and spent the whole day talking with Micaela. At first they spoke of indifferent things, but soon their conversation became deeper and more personal. Often at dusk, with no light but that of the flames from the hearth, they would sit for a long time talking by the fire. Don Ramiro attempted to penetrate Micaela's soul, to see what there was in the heart of that woman who was apparently so cold, and when he found that his thoughts were continually occupied with her he became alarmed. He soon realized that a strong passion had grown up in his heart, and, that being so, he sought to get rid of the obstacles which might stand in the way of his love. "She is so proud," he thought, "that even if she wished to do so, she would not surrender to me. Her modesty and pride will always be an obstacle." In view of this, he devoted himself with all the persistence of a man of strong will, to turn the conversation upon dangerous subjects and set forth libertine theories, always carefully veiled. Micaela discussed with him

without losing countenance: she perceived Ramiro's efforts to overcome her modesty, and, being already perverted in her heart, she took an intimate delight in his perversity. Neither of them thought to be losing ground, and both gradually fell deeper and deeper in love. At times Micaela's voice would tremble and her eyes shone; Ramiro then felt inclined to clasp her in his arms, but a cold look from her restrained him. Don Ramiro left no stone unturned: he lent her Faublas and the *Liaisons Dangereuses* in hopes that they might influence her; but Micaela read these books and returned them with the comment that she had found them dull and silly. Soon afterwards Don Ramiro understood that he was losing the game; but he did not perceive that the loss was not confined to himself. Micaela could dissemble under her cold mask, but her heart was troubled. One afternoon of August, when the old servant was in church and Cesarea asleep, Micaela went down into the garden and as the sun's rays were hot took refuge in a summer-house overgrown by a late-flowering tea-rose covered with blossoms. Micaela was pale and sad; her face had a languid sorrowful expression. In the corner where she sat, rows of broken pots and boxes filled with earth served as a nursery-garden. Micaela was lost in thought. Above the wall she could see the newly reaped country-side, a monotonous succession of treeless hills. A row of poplars grew in wide curves, marking the course of the river. Bridle-paths in various directions crossed the valley, which

was divided into squares of cornland, olive-yard and vineyard. Here and there a leafy garden bordered the river, and the high road climbed like a white riband over the red and yellow hills and was shaded by dark elms and acacias with their shocks of green. Micaela went through the deserted garden; she passed under dark corners overshadowed by a curtain of grass and weeds hanging from the wall. She looked without seeing at the patches of green on the old walls and the cracks from which came the wasps to hover in the sun like floating drops of gold. She passed under trellises of ancient reeds, fastened in the wall at one side, which had formerly supported creepers and honeysuckle. Presently she came from the side walks and sat down by the edge of the central pond. Absent-mindedly she pulled the seed of the rushes that grew in the dry pond, and gazed at the cypress which stood stiff and tall in the garden. What a melancholy tree! Ever withered and alone! Only on the tip of its bronzen foliage did it show green in faint sign of life. In the hot breath of the afternoon it swayed beneath a crowd of sparrows which found shelter in its wrinkled boughs growing close to the trunk, like the veins on the skin of a decrepit old man.

Micaela sat down on a green half-rotten seat at the edge of the pond. With her head resting in her hands she gazed at the deep blue of the sky. A pair of storks flew slowly past. The air vibrated dry and hot as the burning breath of an oven; the leaves, parched

by the heat, hung listlessly on their stalks. Intoxicated with the light and the heat, Micaela dozed voluptuously, and a sensation of dryness, almost of oppression, caused her to take deep breaths of that fiery air, scented with flowers that the sun had burnt to ashes. Overcome by the brightness of the sky, she closed her eyes; the light took on a red hue as it passed through her eyelids, and she felt as though she were under a great red arch of the colour of blood. The twittering of the sparrows, the rustling of lizards in the dry leaves, the buzzing of great flies, all the faint sounds of the garden, added to the throbbing of the heat like an echo of the sea preserved by large shells in their whorls of mother of pearl, caressed her with the dim music of a dream. A great slackness invaded her, and her heart beat violently. She would have wished to be always thus, lying on the ground, without thoughts or cares, reflecting in her grey eyes either the blue sky or the twinkling of the stars. As if her will-power had suddenly given out, she felt too weak to rise. Then she heard someone calling her: "Micaela, Micaela!" It was Don Ramiro: he was coming towards her. The girl got up quickly.

"What is it? What's the matter?" she asked in annoyance.

"I came to see where you were." Micaela languidly went towards the garden-wall and sat down on it. Don Ramiro did as she. Night was falling. Against the sky of faint purple hue lay the violet-coloured country-side, and the

tower of the collegiate church rose red and gleaming in the last rays of the setting sun, like a burning coal. Myriads of swifts swerved in vertiginous flight with shrill cries.

Don Ramiro spoke to Micaela in a soft trembling voice, and Micaela quivered as she listened. The light wind of evening blew across the valley; the bells of homing flocks sounded; a thin mist rose from the river, and the smoke of stubble-fires crept along the surface of the earth. In the sky long shreds of mist were coming together and forming a lake of lead. The sun disappeared behind the distant mountain-range; from the stone tower of the collegiate church came the sound of the evening angelus: its solemn notes floated on the air till they ceased on the distant horizon.

"Shall we go in?" asked Don Ramiro.

"Yes." And Micaela rose against her will.

In the fixed gaze of her eyes, lit by the last glow of the evening, Don Ramiro read something very peculiar. He took her hand and she let it lie in his; then he put his arm round her kissed her on the lips. She allowed herself to remain in Don Ramiro's arms.

"Come, you shall be mine," he murmured in a low voice.

Micaela released herself from his arm and said in a hoarse voice: "No, no, not to-day."

VII

A beggar on horseback!

—SHAKESPEARE, *King Henry IV.*

DON RAMIRO paced up and down the garden, gazing at the night, which had by now enveloped the earth in darkness. He felt himself dominated. That serenity which he had ever displayed in the most critical times of his existence was gone. He was no longer conscious of his strength. He felt a new timidity in the presence of that woman. At other times he had been completely certain that events would turn out according to his wishes; but now he realized that he would not have the strength to resist events; that they would carry him he knew not whither, as the waves carry away a boat without helm or help. He must assume serenity, impose himself on this momentary lack of energy and so long as the weakness lasted live by imitating his former self, making pretence to an impassive coldness and keeping a check on his words and gestures. He trembled with anxiety and fear when he realized that a passion was growing up within him, that his former strong and irreducible feelings were disappearing and that a tendency to tenderness, a need of humiliation was beginning to take the place of his former impassivity. Thus failure of spiritual

energy was shown too by an ungrounded feeling of great fear and by old memories that rose in his mind without the slightest connexion. He remembered his infancy, of which he had never before thought, while the remainder of his life seemed to be fading into oblivion. That horrible time of his early childhood when, abandoned and homeless, he had wandered about living on charity, sleeping in holes and thickets, kept recurring to his mind. Of an even earlier time he had a vague recollection of having lived in a large house with a beautiful woman who, he supposed, must have been his mother. Then, abruptly, he found himself living in a house where Basque was spoken, but did not know who had taken him to it, although he remembered having gone across country on horseback with a man of dark complexion. This house stood at the bend of a path and was hidden behind old ilex-trees, great oaks and branching birch-trees with their silvery bark. The life in this house was what he remembered best as he thought of his past life; all the details of persons and things seen presented themselves to his mind. The house seemed to be looking furtively at the road and to be hiding its body in order to conceal its decrepitude and the marks left on its walls by wind, damp and time.

Below it was a large beech-wood called Pagadi Beltz, the Black Beech-Grove, and as the road passed close to this wood it was known by the same name. In Pagadi Beltz lived

a family to whose care someone or other had recommended Ramiro. It was one of those unfortunate families, rich only in ill luck, for the good God kept raining misfortunes upon it. The head of the family spent his life in toil, for his soil was of the worst and implacably barren; on it he wasted the little energy left in his worn-out sinews. They lived at Pagadi Beltz in the greatest misery, subsisting on maize and vegetables. The floor of the house was not of boards but earth, and it had no chimney: the fire, lit in the centre of the kitchen, filled the whole place with smoke. It was the most wretched life imaginable. Ramiro did nothing but wander about like a little savage all day and only came to the house to eat and sleep. A year or two after he came to live there the master of the house fell ill, and as he was accustomed to suffer without complaining and the village was distant, no doctor was called in. One night, when Ramiro came back to the house, he found the old man was dead. Next day a man brought a coffin strapped across a horse, they put the old man into it and his two sons and the neighbours took him to the village to be buried. In the afternoon the funeral feast was held at the house; they placed a large quantity of lard in a frying-pan till it was completely melted, then they set the frying-pan on a bench, the men formed a circle round it and dipped their warm pieces of maize-bread into the grease.

After the meal the guests and the sons gradually went

away and only the old woman was left in the kitchen. Ramiro preferred to sleep in the open rather than in that house and went out. It was a warm damp autumn night, the memory of it came vividly back to Don Ramiro's senses; he saw the clouds racing hurriedly in their dark companies, he felt the fresh softness of the wind as it murmured among the trees, and beheld the bright moonlight falling through the foliage and giving a fantastic look to the tree-trunks lying on the mountain-side. For the first time Ramiro thought, vaguely enough, of what he should do in life.

At a bend of the road he found himself suddenly in front of a house. Light came from beneath the granary-floor. Impelled by curiosity, the boy crept up the stairway leading to the granary and peered through the cracks of the door. It was a large room, and in the light of some smoky lamps men and women had formed a group round a great heap of cobs of maize, which they were taking from their sheaths. They had apparently finished their task, for after a little time they all got up and began piling the cobs at one end of the room and the sheaths at the other, in the corners. When the granary had been cleared one of the young men took a concertina and in the silence of the night its notes sounded at first confused and hurried, then playing a tune like a bagpipe. Another of the young men got up and invited a fresh and blooming girl to dance; and she, after an affectation of prudish disdain, placed herself

in front of him; an old man beat time, knocking his clay pipe against a glass, and the dance began and gradually became general.

The pairs of dancers came and went from light to shadow; one could hear the clacking of fingers as castanets, the heavy tread of the young men at which the floor trembled, shrill cries of women, and occasionally a shout of barbarous joy, the *irrintzi*, and the mocking laugh of an old man which ended in a long-drawn-out cough. Ramiro felt a great sadness; as he went away a woman's voice was singing emphatically a song in Basque which Ramiro could still remember, a song in which the rustic poet upbraids a girl for being more skilled at the dancing than at husking the maize. The others were accompanying the song by clapping their hands and after each verse they repeated the refrain:

Ay ené, nic ere nainuqué;
Ay ené, zuc nai bazenduqué.

The notes of this refrain with their voluptuous sensual air, excited thoughts of love when heard on the lips of those strong handsome girls.

Ramiro turned away and went round the house. In another room there was a lighted window. He went up to it and heard faintly the lullaby of a mother singing to her child. Ramiro felt his eyes fill with tears and went away;

he threw himself on the ground among the wet bracken and with his face in his hands cried long and bitterly. Never afterwards had he felt so deep an emotion as on that night: all the memories of his life as a man paled and faded before those memories of his childhood.

BOOK III

THE SACRILEGE

I

Night, and autumnal rain, and raging storm.

—HEINE, *Intermezzo*.

THE autumn had arrived; after some days of torrential rain, a fainter sun shone across the stubble-fields; thin mists floated in the sky, the trees grew yellow and thin till their black boughs were revealed, and on the ground the yellow and rust-red leaves danced in frenzy and came and went and raced away in dark whirlwinds. At night the wind moaned in the chimneys and slammed doors and shutters and snorted and whistled furiously. One night all the inmates of the house of Labraz were gathered together in a large drawing-room. Only Cesarea was in bed, having grown worse. It was a large room and next to it was a drawing-room which was never used and was always dark. Despite the light coming from a stout lamp of four wicks set on a solid oaken table, despite the flames of the fire, the room was half in darkness and the furniture and things placed on it were but dimly visible. At either side of the tall stone chimney were set large chairs of darkened leather studded with golden nails. On the walls hung large pictures, of which one could distinguish neither the figures nor the colours; the ceiling consisted of huge black beams which

crossed so as to form hollow squares, and from its centre a large roughly fashioned copper lamp hung on a thick chain. In the rest of the room there were broken chairs, large and small, and a small table covered with chemist's bottles. In one of the arm-chairs close to the chimney sat Micaela; in the chair opposite, the Mayorazgo held his niece Rosarito in his arms. The child lay asleep with her head against Don Juan's breast. Don Ramiro was walking up and down the room and looking attentively at Micaela. She was restless and placed her hands over her face. From time to time Ramiro and Micaelo entered the sick-chamber and when they returned he again began to pace the room and she to poke the logs of the fire. Some time went by; the clock of the collegiate church told the hours with its sad slow notes, and then the clock in the house, a tall clock, narrow and churlish, like an owl, old and shrinking in its corner, from the depths of its coffin-shaped case uttered its thick and peevish notes. I am one of those who have a superstitious respect, the respect of a savage, for clocks. They disquiet me in solitude as though they were persons looking at me. Especially in sacristies in small towns there are tall clocks with pendulum of porcelain and ornamented face. I believe that these clocks have a soul.

"Why does not Rosarito go to bed?" asked Don Ramiro. Micaela went up to Don Juan and was going to take the child in her arms, but she would not come and threw her

arms round the Mayorazgo's neck. "Let her be," he said; "when she is asleep we will take her to bed." Don Ramiro continued to pace up and down the room. "The doctor is slow in coming," he murmured.

"He usually comes a little later," said Don Juan. "Is Cesarea asleep?"

"In a kind of lethargy," answered Micaela.

"Has she any fever now?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so. She was talking just now."

"In delirium?" ask Don Ramiro anxiously.

"Yes, she was delirious," answered Micaela shortly.

"Do you think the doctor has understood her illness?" asked Don Ramiro.

"Yes, I am confident of that," said Don Juan. Micaela got up and pressed her forehead against the window-pane. In the dark night a few fires were glowing redly in the black fields. After fixing a long and frightened look on Don Ramiro, Micaela exclaimed: "I will go to see how she is."

"I will come with you," said Don Ramiro.

"Who will take that pot from the fire when the water boils? Will you, Rosarito?"

"Yes, Aunt."

"You won't go to sleep, my pretty one?"

"No."

Micaela and Don Ramiro went out of the room on tiptoe. Don Juan, with the child in his arms, had let his head

fall on his breast. Sorrowful memories kept coming back to his mind. First it was his sad and suffering childhood; his youth with Cesarea, happy after he had become blind, possessing in that dark life without external objects or incidents that pure light and sun which scattered the clouds and cleared the sky of his existence, rendering it blue and cloudless and serene. And then the immense grief of being betrayed, and the struggle with himself to restrain his desire to fight, to resign himself and put up with people's coarse and stupid irony; solitude, desertion and nothing any longer to bring light to his darkened eyes. Later, when Micaela, now an orphan without relations, came to live at Labraz, a new hope arose in him, not of love but of tranquil affection. In his broken existence it was like a twilight, a cessation of grief.

When Ramiro returned with his wife, his instinct warned him that the dark tragedy of his soul had not yet reached an end. His wounds broke out afresh; the past betrayal enabled him to view with a spirit of complete asceticism his present position, and overcoming the torture that his thoughts inflicted on him, he succeeded in dominating the disorder of his unruly instincts. At times he felt a great and lofty satisfaction in being able to rise above his passions and subject himself to his own serene inspection. At other times, without courage to face his suffering, he clung to the belief that his cares were the result of his constant foreboding. "I have too little confidence," he would

then think, "and seem anxious to foresee misfortune. If it must come, it will, and it will then be time enough to suffer it."

His fears had increased after a short conversation with Cesarea. This was in the sick-room a day or two earlier. Cesarea was explaining to Don Juan the dreams which caused her fever.

"I dreamed that I was dying," she murmured. "You dressed me in a religious habit and you and Rosarito mourned for me, but not the others. After death I went along a road holding Rosarito by the hand, and here was a great black vulture that wished to take the child from me. You were there and protected me from it."

"How absurd," murmured Don Juan.

"Yes, absurd," said the sick woman; "but I have often thought that in such dreams, although one may not foresee the future, one sees the present clearly."

"And what more did you see in that dream?"

"I saw . . . well, perhaps it was mere folly. I would have you promise me one thing, Juan."

"What?"

"That you will not allow my daughter to be taken away from your side. If I die and Ramiro marries again, keep her with you. Do you promise?"

"Yes, I swear it. Only by force will they take her from me."

"Thank you, Juan, thank you."

Soon after this, Cesarea sank into a heavy sleep. Sad at heart, Don Juan went to the window. Far away one could hear the voices of groups of children at play. Don Juan trembled and sighed deeply. Suddenly in the garden he heard the passionate insinuating voice of Don Ramiro and the soft gay voice of Micaela. There was the same indifference in them as in the distant children's voices, the tremendous indifference of happiness towards sorrow.

He thought of this as he rocked Rosarito to and fro on his knees.

"Don't go to sleep, Rosarito," he said. "See if the pot is ready to be taken from the fire."

"Yes, the water is boiling; shall I take it off?"

"No, you will burn yourself; help me to do it."

The child guided his hand and he took the pot and placed it on a small table.

"Uncle Juan," murmured the child, "Mother says that she is going to die. Do you think that she is going to die?"

"No, my little one, no."

"And if she dies?"

"If she dies she will go and live up there with the angels."

"Papa told Aunt Micaela that Mother would soon die."

"He said that before you?"

"No, but I heard him."

"Be quiet, my child; stop talking and go to sleep."

Both the girl and the Mayorazgo were silent; but in the depths of their hearts both felt a strange disquiet.

"And will they take me away afterwards, Uncle Juan?" asked the child after a long silence.

"How afterwards?"

"When Mother dies."

"I do not know, Rosarito, I do not know at all," exclaimed the Mayorazgo, completely upset by the child's words.

"Yes you do. Will they take me away as they took Mother?"

"If your father wishes it . . ."

"And will you come with us?"

"Oh, no . . . that is, I do not know."

"And Aunt Micaela?"

"Come, go to sleep; another bit of sleep."

"I want to stay with you," exclaimed the child, and got up on the Mayorazgo's knees, kissed him and sighed profoundly.

II

If we should fail?
We fail!

—SHAKESPEARE, *Macbeth*.

MICAELA and Don Ramiro left the drawing-room and went into the bedroom. By the light of a lamp with a green shade, one could see the sick woman indistinctly on the white bed. By the side of the bed Micaela's old servant was dozing.

"How is she?" asked Don Ramiro.

"The same," murmured the old woman. Micaela went up to Cesarea and arranged her pillows. "Are you comfortable?" she asked.

"Yes, what is the child doing?"

"She's asleep."

"Take her to bed."

"Yes." Micaela went out of the room, and Ramiro followed her. They had to pass down a long passage to reach the room where Rosarito slept with Micaela. Ramiro drew Micaela to a window in the passage. His voice trembled with eagerness.

"Why do you make me suffer?" he said. "Did you not tell me that you love me, that you would be mine?"

"Yes."

"And yet you torture me?"

"I do not choose that any other woman, even though she be sick and dying, should have a right over you."

"But Cesarea cannot live, her heart has no strength left."

"The doctor said yesterday that persons with heart disease may live many years."

"But not when it is so far advanced as in Cesarea's case."

"Who can say how far advanced it is?"

"And afterwards you will be mine?"

"Yes."

"Without reservation or further delay?"

"Yes."

"O Micaela, if you know how you make me suffer! Day and night I am oppressed with a burning desire to be at your side; my lips are athirst for yours, your voice excites me, your presence maddens me. Oh, let me love you!"

"No; I will not allow any other woman to have a right over you. If I am to be yours, I will have you mine and mine alone; not as a slave with a will of his own but as a lifeless thing."

"That is what I will be, my love. But let me kiss you."

"No."

Don Ramiro ran his hand across his forehead: "And when she dies?"

"She is not dead yet."

"But she cannot last long."

"Who can tell? Yesterday she looked worse than she does to-day."

"Yes, that's true."

"She may get better."

Don Ramiro gazed at Micaela and looked into her eyes; seeing her calm and impassive, he began to pace up and down the passage in the dark.

"Listen, Micaela," said Don Ramiro; "you know that I am not one of those men who have subjected their instincts to any religious or moral code; I have a fierce longing for your red lips and your smooth warm skin, and I am ready for anything. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"I may not be your equal by birth. I am of a despised race which has no other law but its instincts and freedom. Savage passions gave me birth, and in my heart those passions roar like lions in the desert. When I find an obstacle in my path I destroy it. Do you see?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, I say no more. Do you sit by your sister to-night?"

"Yes."

"Does she still take the digitalis?"

"Yes."

"When does she take it?"

"At midnight."

"At midnight I shall be there. How many drops does she take?"

"Three drops in a glass of water."

"Very good. Good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye."

Micaela went into the room where Don Juan and Rosarito were, and sat down in the arm-chair by the fire.

"How is she?" asked the Mayorazgo.

"The same."

"She isn't worse? Tell me the truth."

"I do not know, Juan, I do not know," answered Micaela in a strange voice; "I fear she may leave us this very night."

Don Juan got up, left Rosarito in his arm-chair and began to pace up and down.

"And Ramiro, is he much upset?" he said.

"Yes."

There was a sound of steps in the interior of the house. Don Juan inclined his head and said: "The Magistral and the doctor are here."

"I do not hear them, but yes, so they are."

"Oh, blind men are sharp of hearing."

Micaela shuddered. Could he have heard? Absurd, impossible!

The priest and doctor entered, preceded by Quintín bearing a lamp to light them. He left the lamp on a chest.

The priest saluted gaily. He was a little, ugly man, who out of egoism imagined that everything went well in the

world; for him there was no such thing as a man seriously ill or a family starving. To astonish people with his sermons and busy himself perpetually with the affairs of the religious congregations sufficed him.

The doctor was a tall man of about fifty, with a long nose and a Roman profile, and the look of a peasant.

"How is she?" he asked Micaela.

"The same."

"Let us go to her."

The two went into Cesarea's room, while the priest sat down by the Mayorazgo. "You are not going to see her, Don Antonio?" asked the latter of the canon.

"I will go presently, when she is alone."

"Do you think she is dangerously ill?"

"I do not think so. The doctors exaggerate and terrify one with their strange words. They call a cold a bronchitis, as if it would not be more natural to call it a cold."

The canon went on conversing in this manner for a long time.

The Mayorazgo sank deeper and deeper into his sorrowful thoughts. From time to time Quintín came in and threw an armful of twigs and dry branches on the fire. By the light of the lamp which the servant had forgotten on the wooden chest, one could see two large heavy writing-desks, the oxidized locks of which represented the arms of the Labraz family.

In a quarter of an hour the doctor returned.

"Well?" asked the Mayorazgo anxiously.

"The same. Her heart is worn out. One may live thus for some time; on the other hand, anything may hasten death."

"She is not worse than yesterday?"

"No."

"Tell me, Martin, have her sorrows had anything to do with this illness?"

"Something, yes."

The canon went out of the room, not caring for their conversation, and proceeded to the sick-room.

"So that grief does not greatly affect the heart?"

"No; it does affect it, but not much."

"One does not feel with one's heart, I suppose?"

"No."

"I have sometimes thought as much. One's soul must be in one's head."

"Probably, if there is a soul," said the doctor.

"Do you doubt its existence?"

"I do."

"How can you doubt it?"

"I do. I cannot help it."

"Then you do not believe in a future life?"

"No."

"Strange. Neither do I."

They made no attempt to discuss or argue and were silent. Presently the canon returned and he and the doctor left the house.

Micaela put the child to bed, and Don Juan remained dozing in the arm-chair while Micaela went to sit by the sick woman who was sunk in a lethargic sleep. The hours passed slowly. It was nearly time for Cesarea to be given her medicine, when Don Ramiro entered the room. He slowly approached the bed and gazed on his wife; then he rapidly took the glass from the marble top of the small table and went out; soon afterwards he returned and placed it in the same place but full.

"Give her her medicine," he said.

"Is it ready?" asked Micaela.

"Yes."

When they both turned round they saw Cesarea sitting up in the bed, looking at them with a dreadful expression of horror on her face.

Micaela and Ramiro were so upset that they did not utter a single word.

"Call Juan," gasped Cesarea.

Ramiro and Micaela looked at one another in terror.

"Go away," said Micaela to Ramiro.

Suddenly Cesarea swayed, gave a dull cry and fell sideways on the bed. Her face took on a hue of wax; a rattling sound, slow and terrible, was heard in the room; a few instants afterwards she was dead.

"Give me the glass," said Ramiro to Micaela; and taking it from her hand, he opened the window and poured out its contents.

Ramiro took the shade from the lamp and approached the lamp to the dead woman's face. "She has a look of great suffering," he murmured coldly.

"Yes, it is true," said Micaela.

"Let us place her in a more natural position."

Don Ramiro, with Micaela's help, took Cesarea's head and placed it on the pillow. Then he arranged the bed-clothes.

"Now call Juan," murmured Ramiro.

Micaela entered the drawing-room where the Mayorazgo was dozing by the fire: "Juan, Juan!"

The Mayorazgo rose quickly from his chair: "Dead?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, she has just died," answered Micaela.

The Mayorazgo went with no hesitating step to the bedroom, approached the bed, and took a hand of the dead woman's in his; then bending down majestically, he kissed her on the forehead.

III

Let no one fondly dream again
That hope and all her shadowy train
Will not decay;
Fleeting as were the dreams of old,
Remembered like a tale that's told,
They pass away.

—*Longfellow's translation of Manrique.*

By the door of the house the canons stood round the coffin, set on a table draped with black. Near them were the daughters of the congregation of Mary, with their fringed mantillas over their head and a white scapulary across their breast. Next in order came the chief inhabitants of the town. When a priest with two acolytes and an assistant carrying a blue standard arrived at the house, four peasants from the Mayorazgo's estate took up the coffin which contained the remains of Cesarea, and carried it down through the narrow side-streets, followed by the procession of men and women, to the collegiate church. They entered the church and in the chapel of the Labraz family left the bier on a black catafalque. The church was in darkness; thick green curtains were drawn across the high windows. The acolytes lit the candles beneath the image of the Virgin of the Conception near the Gothic choir-screen. The sacristan

and the precentor were turning over the yellow pages of the antiphonals, with the musical notes marked upon them in red.

In the chapel, near the chancel-screen, the ladies of the upper part of the town took up their places; they were dressed in black, and behind them stood a few old peasant-women with faces and hands tanned by the sun in their dark bodices and flannel skirts. At either side of the tomb were two benches on which the rich and noble folk of the town sat together. There were representatives of the oldest families of Labraz, Beamontes, Zárates, Bengoas, Armentias. Some of these hidalgos wore top-hat and frock-coat; others were dressed in knee-breeches, wide-brimmed hat and ample cloak. Among them all stood out the knightly figure of Don Diego de Beamonte, dressed in the uniform of his order. His noble head had an expression of pride and haughtiness; his white hair fell over his ears; with a nervous hand he stroked his small beard; several decorations gleamed across his breast. By the side of Beamonte was Herrandonea, dressed in knee-breeches and clean-shaven. He was a man of medium height, and in every gesture revealed extraordinary strength and vigour; his forehead protruded above his eyes and rested on thick bristling eyebrows. Near them were others, peasant types, clean-shaven, most of them with a sordid look on their faces. Alizaga, the usurer, was praying fervently. He seemed to represent the classic figure of a usurer: thin, of uncertain age, melancholy and dressed in

black. His white head resembled that of some ancient medal; he lived in extreme misery. He lent money at sixty per cent. or at eighty per cent., spoke little and had few friends. They all remained seated while waiting for the Mass to begin. From time to time the door of the chancel creaked and a belt of white light entered and spread over the worn pavement; then the gleam faded and one heard the dull thud of the door closing. The shuffling steps sounded more distantly in the dark nave. The verger went through the apse, and his silver mace fell with a dry sound on the pavement. As he passed beneath the windows with their yellow and green panes of stained glass, one could see his red and purple robes and his head adorned with an immense white wig which reached to his shoulders. The verger at the back of the choir drew back the curtain which covered the rose-window of the central nave. A broad ray of many-coloured light passed through the church, lit into gold the patterns and flower-work at the edge of an altar and was lost in the dark side-chapels. The bell began to toll. The officiating priest came with black alb and stole between two surpliced acolytes; one of them carried the basin of holy water and the hyssop, the other the censer and the incense. While they crossed the church the bell continued to ring mournfully. When they came near the tomb the priest sprinkled the holy water and intoned a response.

"De profundis clamavi ad te, Domine" (From the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord), sang the choir.

The Mass began; the strong voices of the singers ascended to the cupola, accompanied by the solemn notes of the organ. When the singers were silent, one heard the frail voice of an old man, tired and breathless, reciting the Gospel in faltering accents. When the Mass was over, a priest, followed by an acolyte, went to the foot of the coffin, and after sprinkling it with holy water and waving incense sang several responses. Shrill treble voices answered from the choir. Four servants of the house of Labraz took the coffin and carried it across the church. The hidalgos one after another kissed the priest's stole and went out into the churchyard, where the coffin had been placed on a black table. Again it was sprinkled with holy water and more responses were sung. Then the procession started; first went a priest in his surplice with raised cross between two acolytes bearing candles; then the canons, then the men carrying the coffin, and after them the mourners. They began to ascend a cobbled street of exceeding steepness; from time to time they stopped to pray a response; the bells of the collegiate church kept tolling. Last of all limped an old peasant with a mattock on his shoulder; he was the sexton. With him went his son-in-law, who was his assistant, a tall thin melancholy man, and speaking to the two of them went Mr. Bothwell. The Englishman considered himself a kind of

fellow-countryman of Hamlet and asked the gravedigger strange questions. The lame man laughed gaily without understanding what was said to him; his son-in-law answered the questions sadly. When on arriving at a street which formed a zigzag line, the procession, lit by the sun, stood out against the ancient house-fronts with their great coats of arms, Mr. Bothwell imagined that he was watching some seventeenth-century ceremonial. The procession reached the cemetery and the coffin was again purified with incense and holy water. Then they advanced to the grave and many of the hidalgos placed themselves round it. The lame man and three others let the coffin down by two ropes to the bottom of the grave. "*Requiescat in pace*," said the priest. "*Amen*," answered all present. The gravediggers threw in the first spadefuls of earth, which fell with a mournful sound, and then all left the cemetery; Mr. Bothwell remained watching the gravediggers finish their task.

"It must be a good profession?" asked the Englishman.

"Well," answered the lame man's son-in-law with a melancholy smile, "at least the guests do not complain."

"Why should they complain?" asked the lame man; "do we treat them ill?"

"No," answered his son-in-law, "but it can't be pleasant to spend one's life down there."

"Just the same as anywhere else," answered the lame man.

"Has this long been the cemetery of Labraz?" asked the Englishman.

"Yes, a long time; but it used to be larger; they say that persons were being buried here hundreds of years ago, and once when we dug some trenches" (the lame man pointed out the place) "we came on rows of feet and then rows of heads."

"Persons who had been buried close to one another," said the gravedigger's son-in-law.

"So that they might keep warm," added the lame man, laughing.

"And where are those bones now?"

"Behind the chapel, in the charnel-house."

"Is it open?"

"Yes."

"How can one get to it?"

"One must go through the chapel."

The Englishman went through the chapel and came to a garret full of skulls and heaps of bones. In contrast to these sinister remains, painted images lay on the floor amid staves and planks and purple hangings. They were figures of apostles, bearded saints without arms and legs and noses, and mixed up with them a crowd of angels and chubby mutilated dolls, which seemed to have fallen on a field of battle but were still full of a merry common life. In the midst of these angels was a long black coffin rotten and full of earth. Bothwell came out of the shed and sat on the wall of the cemetery. All Labraz appeared below him. The moss-covered roofs of the decaying city, warped and

curving, were a dull yellow or gleamed bright as silver, and black in their midst rose the tower of the collegiate church covered with cracks and scars. The town hall stood out above the other houses, with its stone frieze. A hollow silence reigned over the town, broken only by the crowing of a cock, the barking of a dog or the flapping of the wings of a dove. No one was to be seen in the narrow streets which from above seemed winding cracks; from a few chimneys thin lines of smoke ascended into the air. There were no workers in the fields; only very occasionally a cart passed, raising clouds of dust on the white road. On the green esplanades cord-makers walked to and fro twisting the hemp which they carried at their waist.

IV

After the funeral the funeral feast.

—*Popular saying.*

IN the dining-room of the house of Labraz, from an early hour of the afternoon, the friends and relations invited to the funeral dinner for the death of Cesarea were seated at table. It was a very long room, with windows looking on to the court, and was only used on solemn occasions. It had whitewashed walls and a plain ceiling. In the centre stood a broad table of plain walnut, and along the walls were a row of great conventual arm-chairs studded with great nails. Each of the hidalgos sat in a broad arm-chair. The table was covered with a single cloth, on which the arms of Labraz were embroidered in colours. The table service was magnificent, being of ancient Castilian porcelain; the dishes and knives and forks were of solid silver and huge; some of them were adorned with rough work. At one end of the table the abbot of the collegiate church presided; on his right sat Don Juan de Labraz, and on his left Don Diego de Beamonte. At the other end of the table sat Don Ramiro; along the sides were other hidalgos, some from the upper part of the town, stiff in their frock-coats, others rustic hidalgos from the surrounding villages who worked on the land and lived as peasants.

Some of them had brought their eldest sons, and the latter, who had lost their fathers' pretensions to nobility, had the look of yokels and were shy and timid in the presence of gentlefolk. Among these peasants sat Mr. Bothwell and Antonio Bengoa. All had a certain air of mourning to suit the occasion: only the abbot who presided, without considering whether it was a wedding or a funeral feast, set the bad example of devouring with a barbarous voracity and without even listening to the conversation. The lord abbot, president of the collegiate church of Labraz, deserves to be described. He was a stomach rather than a man: all the other organs of his body must have become atrophied for lack of use: heart, brain and backbone; he was now all stomach. His father had been coachman to a marquis, and his mother was the marquesa's maid.

The coachman and his wife had intended their son for the priesthood, although his real vocation was the art of digestion. The following answer he gave as a boy proves his capacity in this respect: "What would you like to be?" he was asked.

"I? A pig."

"Why?"

"In order to eat my hands."

This Napoleon of digestion became a priest; owing to the influence of the marquis he became a canon, and as he was out of place among men of higher culture they sent him to Labraz and made him abbot of the collegiate church

there. He was a man of scarcely any culture at all, rather coarse, rather disgusting and extremely dirty. Don Diego de Beamonte used to relate how once in the Botanical Gardens at Madrid he had met a young man of exceptional talent called Miguel de los Santos Alvarez. They were walking up and down talking and looking at the scientific names of the trees and plants on the white labels, when a priest chanced to pass; his expression was dense, his cassock unbrushed and his hat greasy. Miguel de los Santos pointed him out to Don Diego, and as if his cassock had a label attached to it like the plants and trees, said: "*Clericus catholicus hispanicus*." Of this species of *clericus* the abbot was a magnificent specimen, but as the species comprises many types it should be said that he belonged to the *manducatorius* or *digestivus* class. He seemed to be determined to be perpetually dirty. His mantles and cassocks were a kind of atlas, in which the islands straightway became archipelagos and the archipelagos continents; his hat, of huge size, seemed rather than silk over felt to be grime over grease; not the shard with which Job scraped his flesh could have been dirtier; but he had a biretta which far outshone even his hat in this respect. The abbot was of enormous size, with protruding belly, thin legs, large strong hands, while his huge feet, flat and deformed, issued from beneath his cassock like two boats. His eyes, dull beneath the half-closed lids, were on the surface of the flesh, as though they were sewn on to it; his nose was long, thick

and rubicund, his face was narrow, his jaw prominent, and his large yellow teeth resembled those of an old horse. The good priest had a mortal hatred of water; he shaved very occasionally and never washed, so as not to waste his time. Although his brain was deranged by the nitrogen of his rich food and his head was as empty as his stomach was full, he had a certain success as a preacher. His oratory was on a level with the meanest intelligence and could be heard by the deafest ear, for if he did not possess the brain of a St. Augustine or of an Origen he had a throat which might vie with all the Fathers of the Church. He would spend three or four hours shouting and vociferating, for the most part of the time crying out insults against the Liberals and Freemasons. His style was the most picturesque and absurd that one could imagine. He cultivated the burlesque manner with eminent success, and sometimes his strange remarks would cause shouts of laughter among the congregation. He was fond of comparing Espartero with God, only to draw the moral that he was not worthy so much as to unloose his shoe-latchet.

Such was the president of the collegiate church of Labraz, the foremost ecclesiastical authority of the town. The abbot made it a principle not to speak while he ate, and after blessing the meal had not said another word. Don Diego de Beamonte, who suffered from the fixed idea that everything was changing for the worse, began to relate a story of his youth. "When I was a student at Pamplona," he said,

"I had two friends and we were responsible for no end of mad pranks. One of our fellow-students, who had the instincts of a peasant, used to lend us money like a usurer, and at the end of the month we had to pay him principal and interest in such wise that we were reduced to borrow of him again. He used to exploit our needs in the meanest fashion, and we three friends had sworn to take vengeance on him in such a way as he would not forget. One day, the day before a man who had killed a priest and his house-keeper was to be executed, we three friends went to have luncheon at an inn near Pamplona, and with us came our usurer, who besides taking our money made it a condition that he should be invited to all our parties. We were all quite drunk when we left the inn to return to Pamplona. We reached the walls at nightfall, and close to the castle we found that the scaffold had been erected. It occurred to one of us that the opportunity had presented itself to take vengeance on the usurer, and we determined to give him a terrible fright. 'I am the executioner,' said one of the three, 'you are the priest and you are my assistant. Let us go and communicate his death sentence to the guilty man.' We told him that he must make his peace with God, for we were about to execute him. At first he laughed, but when he saw us tie his hands together he began to tremble and to implore us on his knees to spare his life. 'No, no,' said one of my friends, 'we are going to execute you. You are a usurer Jew. Why should we have come here if not for

that? Say your prayers, we give you time to repent having lent us money at so high a rate of interest.' The prisoner sat down on the steps of the scaffold and refused to go up them, because he said it was the custom to give men condemned to death whatever they asked for, and he asked for a drink. We convinced him that this was absurd; we went with him to the chair and made him sit down in it. He had scarcely sat down when his head bent forward and he fainted. We called to him, and, seeing that he did not come to, we all ran away."

"And what happened to the boy?" asked an ill-featured man of crooked glance and hoarse voice.

"He very nearly died."

They all laughed at the story, as though it were really very amusing, and agreed that such witty practical jokes were no longer to be met with. "Everything has degenerated," said Don Diego; "there are no longer young men of that fine spirit."

"You think not?" asked Don Ramiro.

"I am sure not," answered Don Diego.

They all echoed the opinion that humanity was growing hourly worse.

"Words, words, words," said Don Diego's nephew, Antonio Bengoa, aloud.

"What does that miserable chemist say?" asked the old gentleman.

"I say, Uncle, that were you to say just the contrary of what you have said, you would be in the right."

"You see?" exclaimed Don Diego, addressing Don Ramiro; "here you have the proof that we are going from bad to worse. I am weaker and less spirited than was my father; I am only seventy-five and am already feeble. I have no children, so I cannot say what they would have been like, but I have this nephew who instead of becoming a soldier and serving the King, as every well-born person should, has chosen to become a chemist. There's degeneracy for you."

"And why may it not be regeneration?" asked Antonio, growing pale.

"Regeneration, ha, ha! What do you think of this nephew of mine?"

"Yes, regeneration: you have the cult of force and brutality; if you respect the King it is because the King has force on his side; if you adore the Pope it is for the same reason."

A current of cold air seemed to have invaded the dining-room.

"And you, you toads," exclaimed Don Diego angrily, "what do you respect?"

"We? We have the cult of justice, and especially of liberty."

The guests, for the most part furious Carlists, looked at

one another as if to inquire whether the time had not come to act. Herrandonea, one of the hidalgos who had seen active service in the Carlist cause, raised his angular face and breathed fiercely. The abbot looked dully at his neighbours as though to ask why they disturbed him in the midst of his work of digestion, and the Magistral spoke:

"It is the revolutionary spirit," he said. "Who is to blame that these young men will be the ruin of Spain? Their parents, their elders, all those who teach them to forget the practice of religion. So the Liberal spirit spreads like a weed; it penetrates into distant corners; and those madmen do not see it, those madmen do not perceive that the Church is threatened and society in danger."

The canon felt that he was growing eloquent and continued to speak for a long time, while everyone listened to him in attentive silence. Antonio Bengoa was struggling to rise from his chair and contradict the canon, but Mr. Bothwell held him down and prevented him from speaking.

V

"I am ruminating," said Mr. Pickwick, "on the mutability of human affairs."

—DICKENS, *Pickwick Papers*.

THE hidalgos left the house of the Mayorazgo. Some of them found their servants awaiting them with lighted candles to accompany them through the dark and narrow streets. Mr. Bothwell and Antonio Bengoa came out together. "I will accompany you home," said Antonio.

"Why not?" answered the Englishman.

They went round the house and came out into the Calle Mayor. The night was cold and cloudless, the sky crowded with stars; the streets were in darkness; only an occasional lamp, hanging by a cord, swayed in front of a niche, lighting up the image of a saint.

"I do not agree with your ideas," suddenly exclaimed the Englishman; "I applaud your spirit; that idiot of a canon says nothing that is not foolish; nevertheless I do not agree with your ideas."

"You don't?" asked Antonio in surprise; sometimes the Englishman's opinions seemed to him those of a talented man, at other times those of an eccentric fool.

"No; I do not think it is necessary to transform everything."

"Transformation is necessary for progress: without it progress could not exist."

"Well, and what of that?"

"I consider that progress means to come nearer to the truth."

"And if the truth be painful?"

"Even so, one must try to get nearer to it."

"Why? And, besides, the thing's impossible. We know the rudiments of things but we do not know more, and probably we never shall. We know, for instance, that the point multiplied by the point is the line, and that the line multiplied by the line is the surface, and that the surface multiplied by the line is the volume; but we do not know whether there is some further factor. For all we know, volume multiplied by that other factor may be life."

Antonio looked at the Englishman in surprise.

"According to you, then, we must not search for truth?" he said.

"No, because if we found it, we should not know whether it were absolute or not; for me there are only agreeable truths and disagreeable truths: the agreeable truths we must always accept, the disagreeable ones we must reject. I cannot paint, it is true, but I have the illusion that I can, and so I live. Why should I convince myself that I cannot paint?"

"You wish, then," answered Bengoa, "that we should

sleep wrapped in our illusions as in a continual dream."

"Exactly, but an agreeable dream."

"Without attaining anything or succeeding in anything?"

"Just so: to attain or succeed means death. All those English and French and Yankees have that for their only object, success. Unhappy men!"

"Why?"

"Because they are. Those golden apples of the Garden of the Hesperides are rotten inside. It is best to look at them and say: 'Oh, what lovely apples!' But one should not taste them, because they are rotten."

"I do not believe they are so rotten, Mr. Bothwell."

"You are an idealist. You think you live among men and things, but really you live exclusively among theories and ideas. If some day you discover a law, let me persuade you to be prudent and not to apply it. You will have discovered a law, let that suffice."

"It is you who are the idealist."

"No, I am a practical man; for if your law be physical and you attempt to apply it to a machine, you will have to deal with brute matter; if the law be social, you will have to deal with the brutality of men."

"Were one to follow your advice, then material progress would become impossible."

"Would that it might!"

"But that's absurd."

"No, it is not absurd; material progress has served only to weaken us: it has replaced the force of individual men by the energy derived from matter. To-morrow there will be no need for men to add up, because they will have an adding-machine; they need not write, because they will have a machine for that; they need not chew nor digest, because they will have machines to chew and digest; machines will think and speak and paint by means of that disgusting invention known as the daguerreotype. And one day Humanity will disappear and will be replaced by Machinery working on a mechanical system like that of those vile socialists of Paris."

Antonio looked at the Englishman: "Can he be cleverer than I imagine?" thought he.

"All you Spanish should unite against that civilization of material progress, which is not yours. Let the English and French make a town like Labraz if they can."

"No, he is not clever," thought Bengoa; "what he says is always foolish."

They had reached the New Gate, and now retraced their steps.

"I do not know if progress be useful or not," said Antonio; "I only know that a people which has led a life of suffering during centuries has a right to better things."

"What's the odds?" said Bothwell with indifference. "As Hamlet says: 'we fat all creatures else to fat us; your fat

king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes but to one table: that's the end.' ”

“I don't see the connexion,” answered Antonio.

“In England,” went on Bothwell, “they make slippers with the hair of human beings; the rich warm their feet with the hair of beggars. . . .”

“Well?”

“There is something more, as I read recently: the manufacturers of brandy are going to make it out of old sandals.”

“Yes, well? I don't understand.”

“Do the rich wear sandals?”

“No.”

“Therefore brandy will be made from the sandals of the poor, and the rich will drink it and it will run through their veins and fire their brain. Therefore, while the rich walk in their slippers on the heads of the poor, the poor in their sandals' brandy will beat upon the heads of the rich.”

Bengoa laughed in honour of the Englishman's far-fetched argument, and they went together to the upper part of the town.

“Everything is becoming second-rate,” said Bothwell. “In the time of Moses there was a great man, two or three great men; the rest were worth nothing. The valley was deep, and the peaks were lofty. Now with mankind as with Nature it is the same, the heights are crumbling down and the valley is levelling up. Within a few thousand years

there will not be ■ mountain nor a genius on the earth. We are travelling towards level ground."

"That may be true, but we are going towards the good of the greater number."

"And what does number signify? Number will never be a reason. We ask for justice, and Nature is always unjust to us; we ask for liberty, and the attainment of liberty ever implies fresh injustice."

"That may all be true enough, Mr. Bothwell; but with such absolute negations, no nation, no State could exist."

"Let them not exist, then. Do you feel the need of a nation or a State?"

"Well, yes: without them existence would become impossible; there would be continual wars, we should be always cutting one another's throats."

"All the better, that would be a very entertaining sight. Believe me, progress will end by depriving man of his wits."

Antonio Bengoa began to laugh.

"Your uncle was right," went on Mr. Bothwell; "we are becoming decadent. When will humanity now display examples of energy sleepless as that of Hannibal or Julius Cæsar? Are there even any Cæsar Borgias now?"

"Fortunately there are not."

"Unfortunately," answered the Englishman. "Do you know the epitaph in the church of the town where he was buried?"

"No."

“It ran as follows” (and the Englishman recited it with emphasis) :

“Here in little earth doth lie
One much feared in every land:
Peace and war lay in his hand
To do his bidding constantly:
You who through the wide world seek
Objects worthy of your praise,
Your quest no farther need you make:
Here may you well end your ways.

“Not everyone deserves such an epitaph,” added Mr. Bothwell. Bengoa answered with a merry laugh, and they parted.

VI

■ love be rough with you, be rough with love;
Prick love for pricking and you beat love down.

—SHAKESPEARE, *Romeo and Juliet*.

IN the days that followed the death of Cesarea, none of the inmates left the house, even to go to church. The balconies and windows of the ancestral house remained hermetically closed. Don Juan kept to his own rooms, with Rosarito, who since her mother's death had clung to the Mayorazgo's side. Micaela and Ramiro had given themselves up to their love. Their frustrated crime had brought them closer together. A philosopher who had spent much time in prison for fraud used to tell me that in love nothing unites so much as crime and nothing is more disintegrating than ridicule or vulgarity. "In our souls," he would say, "we have a veneration for all that is noble and all that is beautiful. Crime partakes nearly always of these two qualities, exaltation and beauty." Possibly that estimable swindler was in the right. Micaela considered that her lover was subjected to her will; Ramiro thought: "She loves me." And they both allowed themselves to be carried away on love's stream.

They went through the house in search for places where

they would not be found; they went up rickety stairs to the lofts; they walked up and down large empty drawing-rooms which in the days of the family's splendour had been full of life and were now utterly silent and deserted. In a small yard they found a dusty coach among heaps of fagots. It had been there forty years or more, and was the heaviest and most uncomfortable conveyance imaginable. The hens had made it their roost and had gradually covered it with dirt; here and there some red paint showed through. The doors were adorned with the family crest and the pattern was done in yellow, with blue relief. The hens laid their eggs and reared their broods on the shag cushions, and on the hood of the carriage the young cocks learnt their shrill song. Ramiro recollected that the last voyage of this carriage must have been that he had made with the Mayorazgo's mother. At the back of the carriage they had placed mattresses, cushions and rugs; an earthenware jar hung from the axle-tree to keep water cool, and for provisions they had meat and boiled chick-peas, bottles of broth, cold partridges and roast chicken and a loaf of bread of the size of a mill-wheel. Ramiro's account of the details of that journey set Micaela laughing. The two lovers would go up to the rooms of the top floor, and felt as if their love increased amid those broken dust-covered odds and ends. Spiders spun their webs in the recesses of the windows, and sometimes a stray swallow would enter and fly up and down, twittering in front of Micaela and Ramiro. In dark

corners of the garrets, from the peeling walls, to which they clung by the membranes that serve them as wings, hung clusters of bats asleep. Micaela had given herself up to her love with all the heat of her voluptuous temperament and the coldness of her clear intellect.

An intimate sense of grief and relief together filled her spirit, as though in bringing to the surface the instincts of her heart she had experienced both the suffering and the comfort of a successful operation. Often even while Don Ramiro kissed her she could think coldly of many things, and in recollecting the attempted crime she felt no remorse. She did feel herself sunk and degraded in respect of her former conscience; but far from being disturbed by this, she would have liked to sink deeper into the mire. In debasing herself Micaela had found her true level. The deserted rooms through which Micaela and Ramiro went echoed their steps, the murmur of their voices, the sound of their kisses; the broad planks of the floor groaned sadly as they bent beneath their feet. The air rustled in the dark passages; the doors moaned when they were opened and shut with a thud against the worm-eaten jamb, which crumbled in yellow dust. Through the rough windows they could see the copper-coloured fields and the pale blue of the sky, flecked with white here and there, as with clean flocks of wool.

They sometimes made discoveries: cases full of empty bottles, rolls of moth-eaten carpet, strange pieces of furni-

ture, cardboard horses; and these things held their attention for a minute or two, so that they would have wished to know the history of each one of those old things.

In the cupboards they found gigantic crinolines and farthingales, consisting of five or six hoops of wire tied to one another with string, which, starting from the waist, served to puff out the dress, and other articles of unknown use. In cases well preserved appeared skirts of black taffeta falling in large folds, shoes of Morocco leather lined with coloured silk and without heels, shoes with heels so tall that one seemed to be walking on stilts, embroidered skirts covered with lace, bodices of bright-hued brocade, some of them with tall high necks, others low-necked. And there were three-cornered hats, and coats and waistcoats. It was the rebirth of a life long past.

Micaela and Ramiro put on the ancient dresses and walked up and down with comical gestures. "This coat," Don Ramiro would say, "must have belonged to some good hidalgo, some ancestor of yours and Juan's. He would wear it at his wedding and at the baptism of his children. Poor man, I feel sure he spent his life praying paternosters and would cross himself before kissing his wife."

"And this bodice?"

"That must have belonged to your great-great-great-grandmother. She must have been short, for it is too small for you. I fancy somehow that she was pretty, with eyes of a greenish colour like yours, light hair and a graceful

figure. They would marry her to some unpleasant hideous hidalgo hairy as a bear, and the poor thing, when she met a fair-haired handsome young peasant of her own age, would think: 'Oh, if I had not been of noble birth!'" Thus would Ramiro amuse Micaela by inventing comical tales about her ancestors.

Sometimes in her own boudoir she would play a little on the harp or the old harpsichord, and the notes sounded soft and lowly, ingenuous as the songs of children. They reminded her of her former way of life, and it now seemed to her so wearisome, so full of foolish cares, that she felt that a long lapse of time must have intervened. Neither of them spoke mockingly of the Mayorazgo, for they felt his greatness of mind. One morning Micaela and Ramiro walked with him in the avenues beyond the town wall, near the river. That day Micaela felt a real longing for her former life, and, in comparing Ramiro with Juan, felt the latter's immeasurable superiority. They were discussing whether life in the country was better than that in the cities. "Cities oppress me," said the Mayorazgo; "everything in them is artificial, even the air one breathes. My natural inclinations are weakened by the words of one person after another, and I have to return to the country in order to recover my soul and restore my inclinations to their original strength."

"You speak strangely," said Don Ramiro.

"How so?"

"You think things that I have never thought. With me it is just the contrary."

"Really?"

"Yes, in the country I desire nothing, and in cities I desire everything. There a passing desire torments me till it becomes a necessity, and I suffer till I attain it."

"And if you do not attain it?"

"I go on suffering and do not forget it but employ every means to its attainment."

"Every means?"

"Yes."

Micaela listened to this conversation with growing interest; she would turn from the path to gather flowers of digital in the deserted fields and make a nosegay of their poisonous bells, but she lost no word of what was said.

"Can you explain your instincts and desires?" asked Don Juan. "Have you ever felt remorse?"

"Never," answered Don Ramiro.

"So that you do not feel the presence of a conscience which takes you to account for your actions?"

"No."

"You are strangely fortunate," murmured Don Juan.

"When I am asked for an account of my actions," added Don Ramiro, "I am not repentant but amazed. My desires master me. I believe in fate and that one cannot escape its influence."

"I also believe in fate."

"If I had created myself," answered Don Ramiro, "and, moreover, the world around me, perhaps I might then have known what remorse is. But I did not create myself."

"I created *my* self," said Don Juan gravely.

"And also your surroundings?"

"Yes."

"How do you mean?"

"I have lived in isolation; the little I know about things I have attained by reasoning about them in solitude; and what I know about men, by allowing my heart to be broken into small pieces. Every new grief has been a window to light up my soul."

"Mine," said Ramiro, "is a hut with door and windows walled up."

"But mine is open to all the winds of heaven."

"Was there so much room in your soul for all this grief?"

"There was something great here," murmured Don Juan, touching his breast. "My soul had the heat of strong souls; cold from without froze it gradually; it was necessary that it should be so. In the icy atmosphere of mean-spirited men, glowing souls have to tremble with cold. I, without anyone to love me, have frozen in this icy world."

Micaela looked at the Mayorazgo and thought that his face showed great beauty and serenity. Then she looked at Don Ramiro and sighed.

VII

That old man, that sacred head, is that of my father.

—VICTOR HUGO, *Hernani*.

A FEW days later Don Ramiro and old Don Diego de Beaumont were taking a walk round the town outside the walls. After the family of Labraz the Beamontes were the most important persons of the town. Their nobility was indeed much more illustrious than that of the Labraz, for the latter were merely ancient hidalgos who had founded the town, while the Beamontes had taken part in the wars of Navarre and their name figured in history. The Beamontes who dwelt at Labraz were descended from a bastard Beaumont and had been in the service of the King of Spain since the seventeenth century. Don Diego, the last of the family, lived with his nephews in a fine house in the Calle Mayor. Don Diego was one of the most famous inhabitants of Labraz, owing especially to his habit of dressing in a fashion earlier than that of 1830. His two favourite topics of conversation were the decadence of the times and strategy. In his walks round Labraz he used to imagine a hostile army on a neighbouring hill or mountain and would devise means to win the enemy's position. Often he would ask his companion on these walks what he would do if the enemy's

cavalry attacked him on the right flank and the infantry charged on the left. If the answer were that in that case it would be prudent to retire, Don Diego took it very ill and explained the advantage of attacking on this or that point. Don Diego had belonged to the King's body-guard in the time of Carlos IV and Fernando VII, and it would have been impossible to convince him that those two kings, both as persons and as monarchs, had been wholly abominable.

Don Diego liked to tell the reason of his retiring from the service in disgrace.

"It was my nicety that undid me," he would say.

"How so?" someone would ask in surprise.

"Yes. Once at La Granja a lady of high, of eminent rank, I will not name her, gave me her hand to kiss and it was covered with skin disease. I put my lips close to it but I did not kiss the hand. A few days later I had to retire from the service."

Don Diego was a fervent loyalist and quite irreligious, although this did not prevent him from being a prey to superstitions. New ideas enraged him, and more especially the thought that his own nephew Antonio Bengoa was their enthusiastic supporter. That a nephew of his, instead of becoming an officer, should wish to be a chemist, seemed to him the height of absurdity.

"If you have no leaning towards the army," he would say to him, "take to literature like Angelito Saavedra; but don't

come talking to me of pills and poultices; it is unworthy of a gentleman." But Bengoa, who had no ambition to wear a uniform, felt equally indisposed to waste his days rhyming *love* and *dove*, *child* and *wild*, and when he was at Labraz spent all his spare time with the blacksmith or the chemist, discussing machinery, electricity and other matters which Don Diego considered entirely contemptible.

As Don Diego and Don Ramiro took their walk, the latter listened with apparent pleasure to the old man's words, while in his heart he was devising some means of obtaining money. Micaela, tired of their present life, wished to leave Labraz as soon as possible. Ramiro tried several times what he could make by gambling, but he was not in luck and kept on losing. Don Diego was harping on the perpetual subject of his talk, the decadence of the age.

"It has all gone to ruin," said the old man; "my father was in love at the age of eighty, God rest his soul."

"Well, he must have been a fine old man."

"I should think he was. He fell in love with this trull as if he were twenty, and acted like a foolish boy."

"He did?"

"You have no idea. My people were really frightened. The girl must have grown very exacting, and the first means of raising money that occurred to my father, who had not a penny, was to sell the pictures in his chapel, to the great scandal of his cousins, the Bengoas and Armentías. But my father said that the pictures being his, he intended to

sell them; his relations commissioned the public notary to buy them, and my father sold them at a good price, although I believe they were worthless."

"But if this went on he must have ruined you."

"He would have gone on spending wildly had the girl not gone off with ■ muleteer, which so enraged my father that he spent his time swearing that he would beat the life out of the fortunate lover the first time he set eyes on him. In order to ease his mind he gambled the very shirt off his back, and as he had not ■ farthing he began to plunder the family chapel, which then had a few good things, as yours has now."

"But is there anything good in our chapel?"

"Yes, of course, don't you know? The necklace of the Virgin, and her crown."

"I thought they had been sold."

"No, no. Juan is incapable of such an act."

"Oh, certainly; but I thought they might have been stolen during the war."

"No, they are still there. The people of the town go to see them once a year, and if they were missing I think they would kill Don Juan."

"And what were you saying your father did?" asked Don Ramiro.

"He began to plunder the chapel. First he sold the lamp; then he deprived St. Michael, who stood on the altar with the dragon at his feet, of his sword, which was of

silver; after that he took one of the horns of the dragon, likewise of silver, and sold that.

“‘Why have you taken St. Michael’s sword away?’ I asked him.

“‘What need of it has he if he is a saint?’ he answered.

“‘Well, if you must take one of the horns of the dragon you might have taken both.’

“‘I left him one so that he might be able to defend himself; I won’t have unequal combats,’ he answered gravely.”

Don Ramiro expressed his appreciation of this sense of justice, and as he listened began to devise a plan in his mind.

“One day,” went on Don Diego, “I was writing a letter to our steward, and my father, as he dictated it, was shaving by the window. I had just finished writing it when a peasant entered the room, an unfortunate man whom his master, at that time mayor of Labraz, treated in the meanest, most odious way and was, moreover, in the habit of beating to within an ace of his life. The man began to pour forth a long story of woes and vexations, but my father, after listening to him a little while, turned to him with half his face lathered and, looking him in the eyes, said with cold severity: ‘If he has treated you in this way kill him.’

“‘But, Sir, I have a wife and family.’

“And the man continued his tale of woe.

“‘You weary me,’ called out my father impatiently; ‘have not I told you to kill him?’

"The peasant knew not what to say or do, and after twirling his hat in his hands, went towards the door. My father, who had finished shaving and was going out to shoot, looked out of the window and saw the mayor coming down the street. Without a word, he went to the corner where he kept his gun, took it up, raised the trigger and, taking the peasant to the window, said: 'Now kill your master. It is loaded with ball,' he said as he gave him the gun.

"The man stood there trembling.

"'Are you afraid, you coward?' cried my father. 'Here, give it to me, you shall see.' I ran forward and was in time to point the barrel upwards; the bullet lodged in the wall of the house opposite."

"And did they suspect that he had fired at the mayor?" asked Don Ramiro.

"No; I explained that we were going out shooting, and that in cleaning his gun it had gone off, and as with a gun anything may happen they believed me. You will have some idea of my father's energy of mind when I tell you that one day as he sat near the balcony wrapped in rugs he saw the said muleteer in the street below, and thinking that he must be mocking him, jumped up, seized a whip, floundered down the stairs, advanced on his rival and thrashed him till his neck was marked with blood. At the sight of blood the other man took out his knife, and had not certain persons intervened he might have killed my father. That was his last sign of energy. Soon afterwards he had to

take to his bed and be fortified with frictions. A servant and his wife were told off to look after him, but my father was incorrigible and as difficult to manage as ever. A few moments before he died, the servant and his wife attempted to place a biscuit steeped in wine on his stomach: it is called a cataplasm. My father watched them prepare it and then took the biscuit and placed it in his mouth, saying: 'Domingo, I prefer such cataplasms inside.'"

Don Ramiro expressed his astonishment and continued to meditate on his scheme.

VIII

One after one they all go on,
Gallant, jeweller and clown,
Poets, captains, all the town,
To the fair of good St. John.

—*Old Song-book.*

It was market-day at Labraz; at dawn shopkeepers, hucksters and sellers of every kind had carried their tables and benches to the arcades of the Plaza Mayor. The merchants took their wares from great cases and set them out on the temporary stalls. Some improvised booths, fixing a pole in the ground and fastening to it a canvas awning; others laid out their goods upon the ground. The peasants and market-people of the neighbouring villages came in to sell their corn and vegetables, and horse-dealers brought strings of mules and donkeys.

The square was crowded with people wearing brown capes, broad-brimmed hats, woollen stockings and sandals; others wore knee-breeches, sashes and a coloured kerchief on their head; a few wore the beret (*boina*). They were all engaged in examining the booths. Here were broad tables piled with kitchen implements, frying-pans, tongs, sauce-pans and mortars; a little farther on was a mound of bel-

lows of all sizes; at one side stood a rampart of basins, coffee-pots, lanterns and other tin articles; farther on were endless rows of pots and common crockery. In one corner two saddlers had established their shops of straps and trappings; in others were those who sold cloth and plaids and sandals. In the centre of the square were mounds of pimento, tomatoes and red pepper. In all the streets and by-ways leading to the square the peasants rode up on their mules adorned with red trappings; at the tavern doors twenty or thirty mounts were tied, and among them were some of those small white donkeys which consider men with a look of gentle resignation. Among the groups of buyers went ragged beggars with dirty sacks over their shoulder and white staffs in their hand, and old women with skirts of vivid hue. The women inspected the cloth until at last they made up their mind to buy and took some pence from their knotted handkerchief. The men looked at the picturesque harness for mules and horses, the coloured plaids and the many-hued saddle-bags, or at the mattocks and other such implements with white handles newly polished. A man with a large handbill was relating the life of a criminal from the moment when he disobeyed his parents to that in which he ended on the scaffold, to the general satisfaction.

This market-day Don Ramiro was walking up and down the square, sometimes under the arcades, sometimes in the centre; he appeared to be observing the scene with indif-

ference, but his glance fell keenly among the sellers and the peasants. After a while he seemed to have discovered what he wanted, for he entered the crowd and approached a tall thin ill-featured man who had an old portfolio hanging from his neck and cried from time to time: "Has anyone any braid to sell?" Don Ramiro went up to him and said: "I have some braid to sell."

"You?"

"Yes. Where can we speak unobserved?"

"Do you know where the Cañamera lives?"

"Yes."

"At nightfall I shall be there. Go up to the garret."

"Very well."

At nightfall Don Ramiro went out wrapped in his cape and, after going for a walk in the town, entered a narrow winding side-street, into which the light of the sun never came.

He went into a miserable house. At the top of the stairs there was a door and he knocked. The door opened and the braid-buyer appeared with a lamp in his hand. "Come in," he said. Don Ramiro entered a narrow room, from the walls of which hung old braided coats, three-cornered hats and cloths to adorn catafalques. In one corner stood a wooden table, and on it was a pair of scales. For a long time they discussed together. The man said that the times were bad and he could not give more, while Don Ramiro contradicted him. After two hours of discussion they

parted and a low voice was heard to say: "At twelve then?"

"Yes."

"Good-bye till then."

"Good-bye."

All were asleep in the Mayorazgo's house. It was a dark night, and Labraz rested in the shadows crouching in the shelter of its walls. Both in the house and in the town reigned deepest silence. The striking of the clock of the collegiate church broke during a few seconds the stillness that lay over the town; its notes vibrated in the air till their plaintive echoes were lost in space. Then the same deep silence reigned. Suddenly a door creaked in the court, a ray of light came from a dark lantern, and a dark form passed swiftly. It went down a passage to the garden, and going up to a small door in a corner of the wall facing the wall of the town, drew back a bolt. Then it whistled softly, and a muffled figure appeared in the doorway.

"The crown and the cloak," said he who was inside the garden.

"Very good. Here is the money," answered the one who was outside.

The man inside closed the door and returned as he had come; and the silence became even more gloomy and imposing as Night drove her horses round the Northern star.

Five o'clock had struck; the bell of the collegiate church was calling to early Mass. In the deserted streets sounded

the creaking of doors and bolts being drawn; faint lights appeared in the windows. Silently along the streets came old women who were accustomed to go about of an early morning without a light, and made their way unerringly to Mass.

The nave of the church was in darkness, its unadorned walls hidden from sight; only a few dim lights here and there showed up the column of a pillar or the hem of the garment of a saint set on an altar; the light seemed oppressed by the thick shadows rising on all sides. There was a smell of wax and mustiness. As the women came in, one heard their muffling steps, and when they lit wax candles on the floor the solid supports of the nave were lit up, and the columns stood out and merged again into darkness. Don Ramiro, behind a column, was waiting impatiently. The first Mass had begun. A woman wrapped in a mantle came up to him. "It is I," she said.

"And Rosarito?"

"I was not able to bring her."

"Not?"

"No."

Don Ramiro made a gesture of annoyance.

"Let us go; we must lose no time. Wrap your head up."

"Will the town gate be open?"

"They are just opening it."

They noiselessly crossed the church, and in the street followed behind a man who was leading two horses, and

went out of the town among peasants who had come in to the market and, after spending the night in the town, according to their wont, were leaving it at dawn.

They reached the Hornabeque, and Ramiro helped Micaela to mount. "And now we will gallop," he said; and the two spurred forward their horses and were soon lost to sight in the darkness.

Micaela and Don Ramiro were not missed in the house till midday. When the servants went to inform Don Juan he gave them to understand that he already knew. That night, before going to bed, Quintín knocked repeatedly on the Mayorazgo's bedroom door.

"Sir, Sir," he cried in a desolate voice.

"What is it?"

"They have stolen the ornaments of the Virgin, the crown and the cloak."

IX

My lady Venus, wife of my lord Love, I cower
Before thee thy true servant and wholly in thy power:
Thou, Love, of all things art the lord, of man and beast and flower,
And as their maker they obey and praise thee every hour.

—JUAN RUIZ.

THE priest Raimundo went into his uncle's room. Don Ignacio Armentariz, the organist, seated in his arm-chair near the balcony with his spectacles on his nose, was reading half aloud to himself a manuscript bound in parchment. The room was low and spacious; it had two balconies looking on to the trees of the small square. In front of one of the balconies was the bedroom; the bed had hangings of green serge, and along the walls were cupboards and shelves full of books, papers and parchments. The room smelt of ancient paper and leather bindings.

Don Ignacio accompanied his reading with various gestures. He did not hear Raimundo come in, and for some time the latter stood gazing at him affectionately. There was a certain mystery in the old man's face, with its long nose, narrow clean-shaven cheeks, wide forehead and the great silver spectacles.

"I wish to speak to you, Uncle," said Raimundo.

"Ah, it's you," murmured the organist, putting his book from him; "what is it?"

"The fact is," began Raimundo, and was unable to add another word.

"How are you?" asked Don Ignacio. "Do you still have those fainting fits?"

"No, not now."

The organist shoved back his spectacles on to his forehead, looked at his nephew and rubbed his hands.

"I have here," he said, "in a manuscript which I found in the Mayorazgo's house, a charming story. At least it has amused me. I shall read you bits of it: I'm sure you will like it, for it is very interesting."

"All right."

The organist fixed his spectacles on his nose again, took up the book and read as follows:

"In the Carthusian monastery near Labraz there lived long ago a monk named Verísimo, a physician skilled in the virtues of plants, a man of great saintliness, perfect in vigils, fasts and prayer, and, moreover, very simple and charming."

"Here," said the organist, "there is a short prayer, and various reflections about grace, which we will omit."

"Nevertheless, and perhaps on that account, the Devil, who never wearies of watching and spying out the weak points of miserable sinners, ceaselessly laid snares to catch Verísimo, seeing that he was always victorious in the war-

fare (more terrible indeed than that against Job himself) which the Devil waged upon him; Job had not had to encounter such an artillery of lascivious temptations, base imaginings and dishonest ideas as were set out against the good Verísimo. Seeing that he still failed, the Devil racked his wits. Verísimo for his part feared not the Devil in his simplicity, and aspired to become still better than he was.'

"Here comes another series of reflections about humility, and a number of prayers. Shall we skip them?"

"As you please," answered Raimundo with indifference.

"Bartolomé de Emparanza relates that on one occasion, after matins in the octave after the Assumption, a young monk, Fray Onofre, going along the cloister of the monastery, began to stare at a certain point, with a horror-stricken expression. A monk who was with him asked him what it was he saw, and he, paying no attention to the question, began to mock the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, averring that they were a hypothesis; he added that the Pope was an ass and the cardinals, bishops, archbishops, priors, monks and hermits were scoundrels, of the first water. Thus he continued to blaspheme and no one could make him stop, when Fray Verísimo called upon the Virgin, and, wonderful to say, Fray Onofre at once grew calm, and told them that he had seen a troop of devils which Verísimo was successfully driving out. This gave our monk still greater assurance than before; but beware of assurance when you have to deal with Satan. In a city not far from the con-

vent lived a noble gentleman, who feared God and His works, and had long been afflicted with so obstinate a fever that he could find no relief, much less a cure. He had suffered thus for years, and seeing how useless were all the remedies he employed, he resolved to ask the community to allow Verísimo to pay him a visit; and the good monk, duly authorized by his prior, accordingly went. The gentleman had a daughter, Doña Venus, a lady of free manners and diabolical beauty, given up to the pomp and vanities of the world; and the Devil so ordered it that she was the first person the holy man met in the house. And the instant he saw her he fell in love with her. The monk prescribed for the sick gentleman a broth of his medicinal herbs and was about to return to the monastery when a terrific storm arose. They all entreated him to spend the night there, and the monk assented; in a luckless hour he did so, for the lady, at sight of Verísimo, felt herself enflamed with desire and attempted to communicate her ardent longings to him. Verísimo was in a deep sleep when he heard a voice crying: "Leave this house." The monk thought that the cries must be part of a dream, and was about to go to sleep again when the voice sounded again, and Verísimo, perceiving that the Devil must be prowling near his bedroom, leaped from the bed, passed through the house, left the city and took refuge in a desert place, where, like others, dwelt a hermit named Landrino, a learned man, as we understand, and very virtuous. Doña Venus, dis-

satisfied at the monk's conduct, followed him into the wilds and searched from hill to hill and valley to valley all the caves and grottoes she came across; at last she found Verísimo in the depth of a cavern praying with the hermit. Doña Venus, or Satan let us say, since the spirit of the Devil moved in her, addressed him in soft and honeyed accents: "Be not afraid, brother, at sight of me, for no sinful object brings me here but only the wish to join with you in prayer." Consider what words for the Devil to speak, and what could Verísimo do but consent! After supper the hermit Landrino and Verísimo lay down on the ground, and the lady on a hard rough bed which the hermit kept for wayfarers. In the middle of the night Verísimo heard her call to him and say: "Brother, hasten and help me, for the Devil is attempting to carry me off." Verísimo went up to Doña Venus, and she in her terror threw her arms about his neck. The monk began to pray and implored the lady to do likewise, but she started to rain kisses on his face. Verísimo knew then that it was a wile of the Devil and fled from the cave and began to scourge his flesh. The courageous man now realized that he would find peace nowhere but in his cell, and returned to the monastery. Not even there, however, according to Fray Bartolomé de Emparanza, did the Devil let him alone, and, in passing, the chronicler gives the following useful advice: when prayer and silence and scourging and other exercises have failed to dominate the flesh, which continues obstinately re-

bellious, in its battle against the spirit, then in his opinion (and Fray Bartolomé is no mean judge) the best remedy is a change of scene, to leave one's book and exercises, and go out from one's cell to converse freely with others, even if it be but with the beasts of the field, the trees and rocks. Even so Verísimo did not feel secure, for Dona Venus lay in wait for him everywhere; the prior, hearing of this, sent for the lady and admonished her with such gentle words that the gentleman's daughter fell at his feet in apparent contrition, bemoaning her sins. From that time Doña Venus out of love for Verísimo became the patroness of the convent and employed her wealth in pious works and caused its yearly festival to be the most splendid and magnificent in all that country-side. Through her influence the rules of the monastery became less stern; the altars, formerly bare, were filled with coloured images; the walls adorned with marble and splendid pictures; while precious stones hung upon the robes of the saints and were set in the chalices and monstrances. Their way of life became so lax that the monks spent their time in the drawing-rooms in the city. One day, as Verísimo was lamenting the convent's decadence, he was confronted by Doña Venus, young and beautiful as ever: "You wished to drive me from your side and have failed."

" " "You are the Devil, flee from me."

" " "No, I am life and beauty, which must always triumph."

"Then Verísimo flung himself on the ground and exclaimed: "Mary, Mother of Mercy, Mother of Mercy, defend us against the evil one."

"Scarcely had he spoken these words when marble, precious stones, splendid pictures, all crashed down upon the floor of the church, and Verísimo saw a demon, in the shape of a dragon, come from the body of Doña Venus. The dragon was blood-red and fierce and escaped through the air with loud yells which terrified everyone. That is what Fray Bartolomé de Emparanza relates in his history of Verísimo, of the Carthusian monastery near Labraz.'

"What think you of the story?" asked the organist of his nephew, as he raised his spectacles from off his nose.

"What should I think?"

"Do you not consider that this Verísimo was a pretty scoundrel?"

"Why should I think that?"

"A contemptible coward."

"Well, his vow of chastity, you see . . ."

"A dirty slovenly mangy monk. Now what would you have done in his place?"

"I!"

"Yes, you."

"I don't know."

"Would you not have gone up to the dragon and taken it in your arms?"

"What strange things you say . . ."

"What? A dragon in the shape of a lovely girl! Pleasant enough, surely. If no one comes, I will read you what the master says about some of these things"; and the organist got up from his chair and unlocked a cupboard in which he kept the complete works of Voltaire. To read those books was the chief delight of Armendariz. "Ah, here is one who understands," he used to say.

"Read me nothing at all," murmured Raimundo.

"What's the matter? Are you persecuted like Verísimo by a lovely and diabolical woman?"

"No, quite the contrary."

"Then you are the persecutor?"

"I did not say so."

"But you suggested it."

Raimundo was silent.

"Without a great effort of my imagination I would discover who it is. So you have fallen in love like a young officer."

"Good heavens, Uncle!"

"What of it? Nature's laws can never be eluded. Now the question is, did you fall in love with her on account of her exceptional qualities or is it a passing passion for a pretty woman?"

"Why, as to that, Uncle, I can assure you . . ."

"How can you assure me, simpleton!"

"I may be a simpleton, but I can tell you that I have seen beautiful women before now and they have left me cold."

"Like Verísimo. You are a poor fool. Well, you came to me for advice, is it not so?"

"Yes."

"Well, listen. To my mind there are three ways open to you; first, the foolish one adopted by Verísimo: you scourge yourself, you mortify yourself, you eat spinach and lettuce till your sinful desires flee from you; secondly, the hypocritical way: you look out for a young housekeeper who will make you forget the object of your desire and give you some pretty little nephews; thirdly, and this appears to me the most seemly: you leave Labraz."

"And what shall I do away from here?"

"I see that you choose the noblest way. If you set to work and write music, you will obtain fame and money."

"You think so?" said Raimundo with gleaming eyes.

"I'm sure of it. So now you are warned. I have a little money. What good is it to me? Take it and go to Paris."

"To Paris?" exclaimed Raimundo in utter astonishment.

"Yes; there you will be cured and will feel the feverish desire to work. What could you do here? Nothing. The town is falling to decay: in fifty years it will be a ruin."

"And what shall I do in Paris?"

"Study and compose."

"Sacred music?"

"Sacred or profane."

"A priest composing profane music?"

"Do you think your priest's frock is an obstacle?"

"Of course."

"Off with it, then. I will not add another word. My purse is at your disposal. If you are successful, you will let me live in your house; if you fail, we shall still find a way to live. Think over what I have said and let me know what you decide."

A few weeks later Raimundo left Labraz.

BOOK IV

MARINA

I

The man who isolates himself is soon alone.

—GOETHE, *Wilhelm Meister*.

NEWS of the sacrilegious robbery ran through the town like lightning, and created a real panic. The religious sentiment of Labraz, wounded in its tenderest spot, was not slow to respond energetically.

Women wept when they heard of it, as though it were a personal misfortune; the men declared that to be quartered and racked and made to drink burning lead, and other spiritual tortures invented by our ancestors for the greater glory of God, were not sufficient to punish the misdeed of this hardened criminal who in his audacious sacrilege had despoiled the image of the Virgin of a few precious stones which certainly were of no use to her. Some expressed astonishment that the tragedy had not been foretold in the sky by a red comet with a long tail; others predicted that after such a profanation the end of the world could not be far distant and would be preceded by the appearance of the awful beast of the Apocalypse, armed with nails, beaks, claws, horns and other sharp and penetrating weapons, as represented in the handbill of a balladmonger, to exterminate mankind and destroy this planet. On the day after

that on which the outrage committed by Don Ramiro had become known, a solemn meeting was held in the Mayorazgo's house, attended by the abbot of the collegiate church, the Magistral, the Doctoral, the mayor, the judge and a few other persons of equal or similar importance, including Don Diego de Beamonte and Uncle Nazarito.

Don Diego told everyone who was willing to listen to him the conversation he had had with Don Ramiro a few days earlier as they took a walk round the town. "He has tried to imitate my father," said the old man.

And if any asked him why, he went on to tell how his worthy father treated St. Martin and the Devil in his chapel. In Don Diego's eyes Don Ramiro's action was a mere prank, natural in one who was shut up in such an atmosphere of boredom as Labraz. On the other hand, Uncle Nazarito could not get over his astonishment; the deed amazed him. To dare to steal the jewels of the Virgin! For one who did not dare answer his own housekeeper, this seemed a most extraordinary thing.

The mayor and the judge sent express messengers to the neighbouring towns with a description of the fugitives, that they might be arrested. The judge went into the case with all its legal formalities, and cross-questioned everyone acquainted, however slightly, with Don Ramiro.

He filled a whole quire of official paper with their answers, and so skilful were his inquiries that he learnt nothing at all, merely arriving at the result which everyone

knew already: that Don Ramiro and Micaela had fled and that in all likelihood it was they who had taken the jewels.

It was generally realized that the inquiry could lead to no result. A week later it was reported that the fugitives had crossed into France, and the recovery of the jewels began to appear difficult, if not impossible.

Ten days or so after the theft the Magistral paid a visit to the Mayorazgo, and in the course of a long conversation insinuated that the master of the house, being responsible to the Virgin for the stolen jewels, ought to replace them.

"But, Señor Magistral," answered the Mayorazgo, "I am not responsible for other people's sins."

"Of course not," said the canon; "but as the image is in your house and you are related to the offenders, I consider that you ought to do it."

"I would gladly do so, but I have not a farthing."

"You without a farthing?"

"It is the gospel truth. Cesarea's funeral has swallowed up two-thirds of this year's income."

"If you really wished . . ."

"No, no; impossible."

"Consider, Don Juan; the point is that you should undertake to do it, and we will help you."

"It's impossible."

"It's not impossible. You could pay by instalments. The religious sentiments of Labraz must be satisfied."

"I tell you it's impossible. I would gladly do it, but it's impossible."

In spite of this resolute refusal, the canon returned to the charge.

A few days later he came with two other canons to see the Mayorazgo, and the three of them insisted so strenuously that at last Don Juan gave way and solemnly promised to furnish the Virgin with a new cloak and jewels, on the condition that other persons in the town would contribute. The three canons undertook to arrange the matter with a chasuble-seller of Vitoria, who would provide the cloak and jewels.

Don Juan had signed an undertaking to pay the man when the articles were ready. The seller of chasubles demanded a payment in advance, and as Don Juan had made himself responsible for the payment, it was he who had to furnish this. Everyone advised him to mortgage a part of his land, and he was obliged to do so. The Magistral, seeing him easily persuaded, attempted to convince him that for the greater safety of the Virgin it would be well to transfer her to the neighbouring convent of Carmelite nuns. The good sisters were anxious to have the image in their church, and would for the occasion prepare a most solemn service in expiation for the outrage. Don Juan did not oppose the idea and told the canon to do as he pleased. He felt a great repugnance for all this and only wished to be left alone with Rosarito. He would not see anyone nor listen

to anyone. "Poor little girl," he said as he kissed her; "provided they leave me you!" But Rosarito was not old enough to be troubled by these things, and played with her uncle, leading him by the hand through the rooms of the house. She told him what she saw, and pestered him with questions to which he was at a loss for satisfactory replies. The Mayorazgo watched the child's development and thought about her future. What would she be like? He knew she was beautiful, he believed she was good. He would have given many years of his life to have been able to read the future.

Some months after Micaela and Don Ramiro had thus departed, Don Martín Echenique, the doctor of the upper part of the town, called at the house of the Mayorazgo. An old woman came to the door and said gruffly that she did not know if the master was at home. The doctor went in, passed from the porch into the court, went up the stairs and called several times on the first floor. Nobody answered. He went down again into the court and passed through a dark narrow passage into the garden. "Juan, Juan!" he shouted; "are you there?"

"Who is it?" answered the voice of Don Juan from the further end of the garden.

"It's I."

Quintín, the old servant, was digging up the earth in a plot of vegetables. "The master is here," he said to the doctor.

The doctor advanced down one of the paths and came to the open space by the pond. There he found the Mayorazgo seated on the ground and turning a rope tied to the trunk of a tree for Rosarito to skip.

The doctor gazed at his friend sadly. "I wish to speak to you," he said.

"What is the matter?"

"The matter is that you are going to do something very silly and I have come to persuade you not to."

"Something silly?"

"You know what I refer to. You are going to mortgage your land to buy a cloak and jewels for the Virgin, is it not so?"

"I am not going to mortgage them; I have already done so."

"Who with? Alizaga?"

"Yes."

"With him alone?"

"And the other attorney, the new one."

"Then you are done for: they will show no mercy."

"And I will ask none."

"But what will you live on? What are you going to do?"

"I don't know. As long as I can, I shall remain in this house; afterwards . . ."

"Afterwards?"

"How can I tell? Why speak of these sad things?"

"It is sometimes necessary. One must look misfortune in the face."

"The time for that will come."

"No, no; every minute makes your position worse."

"I know it; you speak of this in my own interest, but I do not wish to do anything at present: I wish to live in quiet, if it be only for a month, a week or a day. Misfortune will come in its own good time. Come to your skipping, Rosarito."

"No, you have no right to this tranquillity," answered the doctor; "if not for yourself, then for the child's sake you must defend your property."

"What can I do?"

"Do? Go back on your decision. I will undertake to return the money to the usurers and cancel the mortgage. Let someone else pay for the jewels. How are you to blame for the theft? How can you be responsible? Are you going to sacrifice yourself for Micaela and Ramiro who have deceived you?"

"In a sense I am morally responsible for the acts of my family."

"No, you are not responsible in any way. Have they ever done anything for you? Yes, they have wounded you in your very heart."

"Well, say no more. Besides, it is not only on their account, it is for the whole town I do it."

"The whole town will abandon you as soon as you are left without money."

"I know it, I know it."

"Well, then?"

"What would you have? I have given my word. The thing can't be helped. We must put up with it."

The doctor walked up and down in the little square in the garden with his hands behind his back; then he stopped in front of the Mayorazgo.

"Juan," he said, "you seem to me to be dangerously listless. You appear to be in a dream."

"But it is a pleasant dream, Martín. Let me sleep."

"You should awake and show strength of will."

"Why? Since unexpected events rule life, what is the good of striving against them? One must perforce bow to one's fate. And it seems to me the wisest course."

"There is no fate or destiny for a strong man."

"Do you think I am not strong?" asked the Mayorazgo, raising his face.

"Perhaps too much so. You have the strength of a saint and a stoic; what I ask is that you should show yourself a man."

"What is it I lack in order to be a man?"

"A great deal. You have intelligence, are capable of sacrifice and self-denial; but your instincts are weak and your will-power is dead. And without will, life is a shadow. You should leave Labraz and not yield to these

people's demands; for they are generous with money which does not belong to them but will not give a penny of their own to buy the Virgin's jewels."

"Yes, I will go away from here, I will go away."

"After having ruined yourself, where will you go to? What will you do alone and without means of existence?"

"I will go along the roads, and Rosarito will go with me; won't you, my pretty one?"

"Yes, Father."

"She calls me father now," murmured the Mayorazgo tenderly; and putting out his arms, he took the child and kissed her on the forehead. "We will go together always, and will sleep in the haylofts of the inns. She will be my guide. You will never leave me, will you, Rosarito?"

"Never, Father."

The doctor gazed at the blind man and the child in silence.

"You will not keep to reality," he said, sadly shaking his head.

"Why should I?" murmured the Mayorazgo, smiling; "I have returned to the state of infancy, but a better gayer infancy. All the darts of fortune seem to me powerless to harm me so long as I have this child who calls me father at my side."

The doctor remained for some time without speaking; then getting up, he laid his hand on his friend's shoulder and said:

"Good-bye, Juan; I half believe that you are right: the happiness of the present is of more value than to have the future secured. Good-bye.

"Good-bye," murmured the Mayorazgo, feeling for his friend's hand and clasping it tightly in his. Don Martín crossed the garden and went through the narrow passage into the court. In the porch he met the old woman who had opened the door. "Have you seen him?" she asked.

"Yes. Is he always like this?"

"He is always with the child. I scarcely see him."

"Not even at meals?"

"Not then even."

"But who does the cooking?"

"Nobody. Quintín goes daily to the house of the Goya and brings back a pot under his cape, and the three have their meal."

"You think he has no money?"

"Not a farthing."

"They have taken it all?"

"Every penny."

"Infamous."

"The other day he told me we must do as best we could, for he had nothing left."

"Is that true, Mother?" said a voice shrilly near the doctor. He turned his head to see who had spoken.

"It is Mamerto," murmured the old woman, pointing to the cripple, who lay in his cart looking at her.

"Is it true?" he repeated.

"Of course it is true."

"Then what are we doing here? Let us go, Mother. We are not obliged to live in this house, the house of a heretic. Let him manage as he may."

The doctor looked curiously at the little monster, and when he saw the expression of hatred and malice in his yellow eyes, and felt his steady glare of anger and impotent rage, he felt inclined to crush him beneath his foot like a poisonous toad.

"No, I cannot leave him," answered the old woman.

"You cannot? Well, I can," cried the cripple. "Let him remain with Quintín: I'm off."

"Where to, my son?"

"Anywhere." And the cripple took out his small bottle of oil, which he kept in the pocket of his coat, and oiled the wheels of his cart.

This action of his in his fit of rage was more than grotesque; the doctor could not restrain his laughter. Mamertín looked at him steadily with a furious expression, then put his short sticks that he held in his hand to the ground and went out through the door. Swiftly he went along the square by the church, rapidly moving his arms as though they were oars. A dog passed close to him; Mamertín

struck it with one of the sticks he carried, and the animal ran off howling. Again the doctor felt an inclination to crush like a poisonous animal this thing without resemblance to anything human that was crawling along the ground, more venomous than a reptile, on its little four-wheeled cart.

II

You that way: we this way.

—SHAKESPEARE, *Love's Labour's Lost*.

THE winter went over, and part of the spring. Don Juan hardly went out, he did not even go to church, to the great scandal of the town. His house had its windows perpetually closed, as though no one lived there; only at certain hours Quintín might be seen going out on some message. Some days after the Carnival, one afternoon at nightfall, Quintín the Mayorazgo's old servant was seen to enter the ancient house in the company of the doctor. Rosarito was ill. For some days she had been sad and listless; then came a night of fever, and next morning she could not get up. The Mayorazgo became alarmed. "How is she? What is the matter with her?" he asked the doctor anxiously.

"I cannot say yet. She is very feverish. We shall see."

Two days later the doctor said that he suspected that it was typhus.

On the third day the illness was so clear that Don Martín without further hesitation declared the case most serious. Rosarito was in a high fever, which increased daily; at night, when the fever rose, she became delirious and moved

restlessly in the bed; at dawn the fever would diminish slightly. She grew thinner and thinner, her cheeks were a hectic red, while her lips and teeth became almost black. The doctor spent as much time as he could with the Mayorazgo, who was never absent from Rosarito's bedside. Quintín helped his master to nurse the child. "We must have a nurse," the doctor kept saying; "the illness may go on a long time." But the Mayorazgo had no money, and he wished no mercenary hands to nurse his niece; on the advice of the doctor he wrote to some relations at Arnedo and waited an answer, but no answer came. All Labraz spoke of the neglected state of the girl, yet no well-to-do person in the whole town came to the house. Only the Englishman sometimes called to inquire after Rosarito. As for the poor people, less fearful and also more generous, they often came. One day the Preacher with two daughters of the Goya called to inquire. The two girls spoke to the Mayorazgo. Marina felt profoundly saddened as she saw the weariness and grief on the blind man's face; then with sudden courage she expressed a wish to see the child. Blanca very reasonably opposed her sister's imprudence; but Marina, without heeding her, followed the Mayorazgo through the passages of the house to visit the sick girl. The room in which Rosarito lay was formerly Micaela's bedroom. It was next to a room decorated in the Pompadour style and separated from the bedroom by pillars. This room had pictures on the walls and a carved wooden ceiling; at one

end, under a chimney-piece of white marble, burnt a fire of old planks and fragments of chairs. At the farther end of the bedroom on a very large bed lay Rosarito, grown very thin and with cheeks reddened by fever. When she saw Marina she smiled sadly and put out her hand.

“Do not go away,” she murmured feebly.

The girl saw in the child’s eyes such an earnest entreaty not to leave her alone that in her emotion she sent a message to Blanca to say she would remain. Blanca tried anew to dissuade her; but Marina answered that she would not consent to abandon the child to the care of an old servant and a blind man in that deserted house.

Blanca and the Preacher departed, and Marina sat down by the side of Rosarito’s bed. When night came, the Goya went to the house and remonstrated with Marina and warned her of the danger she was running by remaining there and of what they would say in the town.

“They may say what they like,” answered Marina impatiently; “I have promised to look after Rosarito and I shall do so. Let them gossip and talk their fill, I will do what I consider right.”

The girl’s resolution proved invincible. After she had been there a few days nursing Rosarito and scarcely sleeping, she was changed and thin; but the melancholy which for some time previously had cast a veil over her eyes had disappeared and had been replaced by an activity and eagerness foreign to her nature. The doctor, on learning

what the girl had done, congratulated her heartily; and as he did so, the blind man took one of her hands and pressed it in his own.

It was a strange sensation for Marina to live in that house in which grandeur and penury existed side by side. She felt something like the satisfaction of revenge in occupying the room of proud Micaela, and in giving orders in the house, although the only people in it were the Mayorazgo and Quintín. Both of them obeyed her blindly, convinced that what she ordered must be right. But what were Marina's thoughts at night as she watched by the head of Rosarito's bed with the Mayorazgo! Never in her life had she experienced such sensations. Thoughts came to her about the way of life of the people, and principally about herself. Her love for Don Ramiro had seemed so deep and intense, and now it appeared on the surface of her spirit without penetrating, like those plants in ponds which grew on the surface of the water.

At other times, without thinking of anything, she would gaze at the cracks in the walls partly hidden by coloured lithographs of odalisques and Moors, and engravings framed like medallions, or, lost in vague thoughts, would watch the odds and ends brought by Quintín from the garret as they blazed on the hearth: among them were many old frames showing the joiner's work, skeletons of conventual arm-chairs with gilt nails, elaborately decorated pieces of carved chests.

Marina saw to it that the sick-room became, if not beautiful, at least comfortably sheltered and clean. She put curtains on the bed, and nailed a large piece of carpet over the balcony window, the shutters of which did not fasten properly and let the air through.

Rosarito became worse and worse. The illness had, according to the doctor, reached its highest point; but it stayed there. The fever had the same ups and downs, diminishing in the morning, increasing at nightfall. Long weeks passed thus; the child was reduced to skin and bones, and thin dark blood came from her nostrils.

Marina scarcely took any rest. Rosarito wished to have her always beside her. She developed strange caprices; one of them was to beg the Mayorazgo and Marina to speak to one another in the informal second person. Marina found it very difficult to do so at first.

There came a day when the doctor said that the child was very bad. She was delirious, muttering in a low tone; and her movements were very restless. It seemed there could be but one end. The Mayorazgo spoke to Marina. From the very beginning of the illness he had felt that Rosarito would die. That night the child became so much worse that it was thought the end was near. The Mayorazgo had not the courage to remain by the bedside; he opened the balcony window and leant against the balustrade. It was a calm night. For the blind man life at this moment was a horrible dream, a ghastly burden. The

whole earth seemed to him one vast grave which would never again see the sun. He was certain that the child would die, and had no other wish but to die also. His only aspiration was to return to the dust from which he came. To disappear, to die! And since Nature had fashioned him as a monster, a living sorrow, deprived of the chief blessing of life, he wished that no inscription should record his name, no tombstone indicate where his body lay. To disappear as soon as might be! To become one with the eternal infinite universe of matter!

After a few minutes, which for him were centuries, the Mayorazgo returned to the room; the child was still delirious. Don Juan hid his face in his hands and waited in an agony for the moment when Marina should inform him that all was over. The child ceased to be delirious; in the silence of the night a sinister gargling sounded, like that of water from a bottle; then the gargling stopped.

"Yes?" asked the Mayorazgo with anguish written in his face.

"No. Not to-night," said Marina. "I think she is better."

The Mayorazgo convulsively lifted his arms to Heaven and began to stride up and down the room. The clock of the collegiate church marked the hours with its slow notes which quivered long on the air with cold indifference. A cock crowed in the distance. The Mayorazgo approached the bed, kissed the child and said to Marina: "Now sleep

a little." Marina sat down in an arm-chair and rested for a couple of hours in a deep sleep. When she awoke, light was stealing through the holes of the carpet she had hung up and, faintly entering the room, seemed to be feeling its way about it. A ray of sun shone on the window-pane.

The acute phase of the illness passed, but the fever remained. The doctor advised Marina to take the child from the bed well wrapped up in rugs and carry her into the garden in the heat of the day. Rosarito was a mere skeleton; she spent the time in Marina's lap, calling her mamma, listening to her stories and kissing her on the neck. Marina sang to her; some of the songs were Basque ones which she had learnt from her father. One of these was a very melancholy sentimental song, a slow sad lamentation, which Rosarito liked to hear. One of its verses ran as follows:

Oiñcho polita, zapata eder
chorgatilla gustiz fiñá
jantzi ederqui eguiñá
teliaco modaco fiñá.
Ay neretzaco baziñá!

The last line was long-drawn-out and ended in a low sorrowful note. Marina's long sojourn in the Mayorazgo's house produced great indignation among the people. Her mother kept on warning her: "All the town is talking of you."

"Let them talk," answered Marina; "even if everyone insults me, I will not leave that child alone."

One afternoon at dusk, when Marina, the Mayorazgo and the child were in the garden, Rosarito, her eyes sunken and reddened with fever, laid her cheek against Marina's and said: "What is there yonder, mamma?"

"Where, Rosarito?"

"Up there," murmured the child, pointing to the reddened horizon.

"Only clouds," answered Marina.

"And what are clouds?"

"I do not know; your uncle will know."

"I do not know anything either," murmured the Mayorazgo sadly.

"But I see many things," said the child; "I should like to go up there and ride upon a cloud. Take me up there, mamma."

"Presently."

It was a splendid sunset. The sun, hidden behind a cloud, lit up the sky all round it. The child, her cheeks red with fever, pointed out to Marina a scarlet dragon running along a sea of blue, a gigantic swan, gleaming islands, crimson mountains. The Mayorazgo perceived that the child was delirious and they took her into the house. Rosarito asked to be taken near the window, and gazed fixedly at the sun, which was setting behind distant hills, and at the clouds, which were turning grey and ashen at the

approach of night. Then she began to mutter indistinctly. Marina noticed that she was growing pale and cold; she called to her and she answered vaguely; then she saw that she murmured something feebly, then sighed with a gasp, closed her eyes and died. Marina's sobs told the Mayorazgo that the end had come; he approached trembling, knelt at Marina's feet, and took Rosarito's hand and kissed it, bathing it with his tears.

III

Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?

—SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*.

They have me mad.

—SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*.

THAT night no one came to the Mayorazgo's house. Marina dressed the child in its best dress, while Don Juan and Quintín arranged the principal drawing-room as for grand occasions. The blind man carried the body into the drawing-room and placed it in the centre on a table, its head resting on a cushion. There were in the house some stands with great yellow candles which were lit on All Saints' Day in the chapel of the Labraz family in the collegiate church. The Mayorazgo ordered Quintín to bring out these stands and light the candles. Then he told him to cut all the flowers in the garden and strew them on the floor. The room with the twelve candles burning had a terrible air of gloom. The rough figures in the pictures seemed to come to life, and the ancient mirrors, the locks of the chests and the gilt frames gleamed. Every object appeared to tremble as the light flickered from the sputtering candles.

Marina, the Mayorazgo and Quintín watched by the body

all night. Marina seemed stupefied; the Mayorazgo, seated in an old arm-chair studded with gilt nails, resembled a stone statue; Quintín came and went with muffled steps. Marina, upset by the light and the smell of wax, went out from time to time on a balcony which looked on to the garden. It was a cool night; the wind was moaning in the distance, then came nearer and swayed the trees and beat against shutters and balconies till it died away in a sigh, as the threatening wave of the sea breaks gently on some desolate shore. Sometimes a slighter breath of air dying as soon as born would creak in a door's hinges or whistle in the chimney.

Next morning, after the funeral, most of the principal persons of the town assembled in the ancient house. They all greeted the Mayorazgo and passed out one by one until there remained but the Magistral, the notary, the usurer Alizaga and Don Diego de Beamonte. The Magistral described the ceremony on the occasion of the transference of the Virgin to the neighbouring convent: the nuns would dress her in the new cloak and crown, they would place in her hands the seal and keys of the convent, and they would carry her in procession through the cloisters, singing the *Te Deum*. All the nuns on their knees would promise to obey her. The Mayorazgo listened with a sad and gloomy air, his head bowed, deep in his own thoughts. The Magistral, confident of his oratorical gifts, perhaps a trifle nettled by this lack of attention on the blind man's part,

exhorted him to resign himself, and even suggested that the child's death might be a punishment for the bad life he had recently led. The Mayorazgo did not answer, and the Magistral returned to the charge, and advised him to give up the girl who had scandalized the town.

"Yes, you should give her up," said the notary and Aligaza.

"Give up whom?" asked the Mayorazgo, as though waking from a sleep.

"Why, who but that girl, the innkeeper's daughter?" answered the Magistral disdainfully.

Scarcely had he spoken the words when the Mayorazgo jumped up from his chair and confronted him: "You villain, coward," he shouted in a voice of thunder. "You blackguards. First you rob me and now you come with your advice. Get out if you don't want me to crush you with my hands."

"Good gracious, Juan," exclaimed the Magistral.

"Be silent, miserable priest, who deny your own people. You are the son of a runagate, and you consider it a crime to be the child of an innkeeper. Not another word. You are incapable of a single good action, and believe that others are as mean as you are, unable to imagine the existence of a disinterested person; and so you come to insult in my presence a poor girl who sacrificed herself for the sake of my daughter."

"He is mad," muttered the notary.

"Yes, I am mad," roared the Mayorazgo; "you have made me mad, you who are capable of any infamy and are accustomed to plunder the conscience and the property of others. But that is at an end. I have recovered my strength of will that was dead. Yes, it's at an end. I am Samson: I will break in pieces your temples full of infamous idols; I will destroy your cities in which monsters breed. I will hurl myself like a raging bull against your whole edifice of lies. Go!"

And the Mayorazgo went up to the three men with his fists clenched. The three fled away quickly.

At midnight Quintín awoke with a start, and heard footsteps on the stairs. He opened the door of his bedroom and saw the Mayorazgo with a lighted torch in his hand.

"Where are you going, Sir?" asked the old servant.

The Mayorazgo, without hearing him, went out of the house, crossed the square near the church and approached the town wall. Below it lay the heaps and sheaves of corn piled on the threshing-floors. The Mayorazgo whirled the torch round his head and threw it violently into the air. A few moments later a tremendous flame arose from the spot.

"You have set fire to the whole harvest," said Quintín.

"So much the better! Let everything go to rack and ruin and the whole town burn!"

"Let us flee from here," cried the servant.

"Flee you if you like, but I will not!"

A gust of wind fanned the fire.

"Blow, hurricane," shouted the Mayorazgo in a voice of thunder. "Fire and lightning and ruin everywhere! Fields, woods and houses! May everything be utterly destroyed in this accursed town!"

The inhabitants had now perceived the fire. The church bells rang out in alarm, the gates of the city were opened, and men and women fled in terror from Labraz.

The Mayorazgo crossed the town, went out through the gate under the wall, and was lost to sight in the darkness.

BOOK V

RECOVERED WILL-POWER

I

He who dares call himself free finds chains everywhere; he who has the courage to recognize that he is a slave finds himself free.

—GOETHE, *Elective Affinities*.

SOME months afterwards, on a grey and gloomy winter afternoon, a few persons were assembled in the Goya's shop. It was a dark day, and the black clouds which covered the sky fell in a fine rain mixed with flakes of snow. The lamp had not yet been lit; a pale thin light entered by the window and was scarcely sufficient to distinguish by it the features of those present. Down the passage one saw the clear light of the kitchen fire, and one could hear the sound of a pestle pounding in a mortar. In the dim light Bothwell, Perico, the Liberal of Labraz, and one or two others were conversing together. It was the Englishman who was speaking, and he was telling stories of animals. "I know a poor bear," he was saying, "which in the company of some showmen used honestly to earn its living by dancing to the sound of the tambourine. One day, in a mountain village, it suddenly felt a desire for independence and ran away. The poor animal, finding itself free and in the snow, must have thought itself in paradise. It tore off its muzzle, broke its chain and devoted itself to carry off

such sheep as it fancied most. He would approach the flocks walking on his hind legs, clap his hands like a civilized bear and single out a sheep to take. Sometimes, when he had had more than enough of flesh, he would go to the beehives for his dessert. Before going he bathed in a stream, then rolled in the mud so as to cover himself with a thick crust which the bees' stings could not pierce. He then carried off a hive and ate the honey in some pleasant quiet spot. In spite of his cleverness and although he did no harm to anyone, the poor bear was hunted down and killed; a real misfortune."

None of the Englishman's listeners was of opinion that the death of the bear was a real misfortune, and in a melancholy voice he began another story: "Once I had a cat called Francis, which was very fond of me, but as it was Scottish it was exceedingly proud. It was very independent, and had made a tacit compact with me: 'I kill the mice; you feed me.' And Francis performed his part of the contract; but, as I said, he was very proud and disdained any show of affection or sympathy. If I stroked it, it would look at me with real scorn. But when I was in bed and it thought that I was asleep, it would come on to my bed and caress me with its paw. Then I had another called Joseph . . ."

At the moment the Englishman's story was interrupted by the entrance of the Goya, who inquired if anyone had seen Marina. Up till now she had supposed that she was

with her sister, but Blanca was alone. Marina was not in the house.

Marina was sewing in her room, when, going to the window, she saw a man wrapped in a brown cloak approach the door under the arcade of the Calle de Jesús. His height and his uncertain gait attracted her attention. One would have said it was the Mayorazgo disguised as a beggar. Marina went on with her sewing, and then she heard someone sing in a low voice the very song with which she used to lull Rosarito to sleep. Marina went down to the porch and saw the tall stout beggar in the long light-brown cloak, leaning against one of the pillars of the arcade.

"Is it you?" asked the girl.

"Yes," answered the Mayorazgo, "I have come for you."

"For me?" murmured the frightened girl.

"Yes. Will you come with me? I am all alone."

"Poor Don Juan!"

"No, if you only feel pity for me, let it be; but if you care for me at all, then come. We will go along the highways. You shall be my daughter. Rosarito would have gone with me."

Marina gazed fixedly at the Mayorazgo.

"Wait," she said.

She went up to her room, wrote a few lines on a piece of paper, and went down again at once.

"Let us go," she said to the Mayorazgo.

"You do not ask where?"

"I will go wherever you wish."

They went down the Calle de Jesús and out of the town. A fine rain, mixed with snow, was still falling.

"What have you been doing all this time?" asked Marina.

"I have lived."

"Is that all?"

"Do you consider it a trifle? Besides, I have reconstructed my life and have a plan. In a town on the edge of the Mediterranean, my family possessed a house and garden. That house is still mine. We will go there together on foot. It is not cold there as it is here; there, they say, the sky is perpetually blue and clear. Shall we go?"

"Yes, if you wish. How shall we find the way?"

"What matters the way? Besides, we can ask."

Night fell, and it began to snow hard. They entered the hut of a road-mender by the side of the road. They sat down on a bench, and Marina set fire to a few faggots in a corner. The Mayorazgo took from his knapsack a piece of bread and cheese.

"Dry yourself at the fire, Rosarito," he said.

"Why do you call me Rosarito?"

"Let me call you so, and call me father, as she did."

Marina made no answer. The flames lit up the white-washed walls of the cottage; a cold wind blew in, bringing with it flakes of snow.

"Get into the corner, Rosarito, out of the cold," said the Mayorazgo.

Marina crouched in the corner, wrapped in the plaid. They were half asleep when a man's loud voice awoke them: "Good evening, friends; let me warm myself at your fire." The Mayorazgo whispered to Marina: "Who is it?"

"It's a poor man."

It was a young beggar, sun-baked and with a great shock of black hair falling over his shoulders. He sat down by the fire.

"Have you come far?" asked Don Juan.

"Yes, from where they do not speak Castilian."

"And where are you going?"

"Towards the South."

"You live there?"

"No; I live anywhere."

"But have you no home?"

"No, nor do I want one."

"Why not?"

"If one can live in the open air, why shut oneself up in one of those human dens called towns?"

The beggar took out a dingy hunk of bread, politely offering a share to Marina and the Mayorazgo.

"And how can you always live in this way?" asked the latter.

"They give me alms in the towns."

"Are you Spanish?"

"I think so."

"You are not sure?"

"Nor do I care; for the penniless the whole world is a country."

"And have you lived this wandering life long?"

"Ever since I was born. My father was a huckster who went from town to town selling trinkets in a cart. I have abolished the commercial side of the business."

"But do you not miss living in a house?"

"No, I prefer caves and thickets, fair liberty and the country. You who live in cities are ruined by the desire to possess. You want to have a house of your own, a wife, children; if you possessed nothing and desired nothing, you would be happy."

"So you consider yourself happier than those who live in cities?"

"Yes; they are poor people who have not the strength to live a natural life."

"You astonish me. I thought vagabonds were thieves, not philosophers."

"One may be both."

"That is true."

"As for me, when I have nothing to eat I steal. I defend my life as best I can."

"You steal?"

"Yes. Why should that astonish you? I take what I

need. Sometimes I go to prison. And the days I spend in prison make me find liberty all the fairer."

"Strange!"

"Of course it astonishes you who have lived among superstitious people, full of prejudices. You are a slave of society."

"That is so."

"And I am not. To preserve my liberty, I refuse to live in cities; I prefer the country. In winter I sleep by the roadside or under a bridge. In summer I lie down on the good earth and smoke my pipe as I gaze at the stars."

"I see that you likewise are a slave, the slave of this liberty of yours," murmured the Mayorazgo.

"Possibly," answered the tramp.

"Assuredly."

"Well, I am not attempting to convince you. Good night. I am going to sleep."

The tramp wrapped himself in his rags and lay down on the floor.

Next day they were all up at dawn. "Good-bye," said the tramp. "Probably we shall not meet again. I hope you may be successful, whatever be the object of your search."

"Good-bye, and good luck go with you," answered the Mayorazgo.

Don Juan and Marina left the hut. It had ceased to snow; and before them lay a dim prospect of snow-covered plains; where the snow had not entirely hidden the soil, it showed red as blood.

II

Only the poor know what the poor suffer; only they have learnt how best to help them.

—LESSING, *Nathan der Weise*.

DURING the first week, they passed through the Rioja, a country of open plains planted with vines and hills covered with olives. At the beginning of the second week, they left the high road and took across country. A thick mist veiled the air, and day was long in coming. One could scarcely see the trees on either side of the road; the grass was white with frost; from time to time vague forms of houses loomed up and were lost again in the mist. As they advanced and the pale light of the misty day grew clearer, they could distinguish yellowing oak-woods, meadows where shepherds in long brown capes ran to and fro, following their sheep, their crooks raised above their heads. Bands of crows flew past, and on the grey horizon the sun succeeded in shining like a yellow sickly moon. Suddenly the road came to an end in various paths, and the Mayorazgo and Marina followed one of these. The sun was still struggling with the mist; now victorious, now vanquished, it would appear pale and weak, then grow redder and brighter and disappear again in the mist. It seemed to be finally defeated, when suddenly the sky

became very blue and torrents of light were poured over the whole earth. It was a splendid morning; after crossing some hills, Marina saw in front of them mountains gleaming in the pure whiteness of the snow. On one of the flanks of the mountain, cows and herds of goats were grazing. A few herdsmen and shepherds, dressed in their white cloaks or in large brown capes, all dirty and unshaven, looked at the Mayorazgo and his companion with the same indifference as did the oxen, which raised their heads from grazing for a moment to gaze at them with their large sad eyes. A shepherd seated on a stone was playing a primitive song on his pipe; its notes fell ingenuously on the silent morning air. A herdsman passed close to the two wayfarers, running and hurling stones from his sling, which he whirled about his head. "Where are you going to?" he said.

"We wish to cross the pass."

"It's a bad time of year for that," answered the herdsman.

"Yes, but we have to go," murmured the Mayorazgo.

"In that case I say no more. Go where you see that clearing yonder; you will come to a village called Molinos, there they will point out the way." Marina asked the herdsman winningly if he could not give them something to eat, and he filled a horn which he carried at his waist, with milk from his cows. Marina and the Mayorazgo went forward and at midday, when the sun was really hot, they lay down to sleep. Towards the end of the afternoon they

went up a steep paved way over a hill and arrived at a village. On either side stood houses with ancient coats of arms; in the court before the church the priest was walking up and down with his hands behind his back; a dark old woman was winding the flax she had spun on to her reel. The Mayorazgo asked the old woman for the mayor, and she pointed out a small house on the ground-floor of which was a smithy. It was a dim room with two windows. A boy blew the bellows with his foot; a youth held a glowing piece of iron in the forge, and a strong man with bare arms was resting, leaning on his hammer. This man was the mayor. The Mayorazgo informed him that he and his daughter were travellers who had no money to pay for a night's lodging.

"Wait an instant," answered the mayor. The youth brought the glowing iron from the flames and placed it on the anvil; the man's heavy hammer and the small hammer of the youth sounded alternately like the ringing of bells. After they had hammered on the anvil for a long time, the youth took the iron in the tongs and dipped it in a basin of water. The smith then put on his jacket and, turning to the Mayorazgo and Marina, said: "Come, I will take you to the inn." They went through the village, a wretched group of houses with conical chimneys and low roofs, and entered the inn through a long passage. The mayor recommended the two travellers to the mistress of the inn; the servant conducted them to a raised dais with wooden tables, and they sat down. In the centre of the kitchen a few men were playing

cards. Some of them had long hair, with tufts over their ears, and wore cloaks and fur caps; others wore white capes with small hoods, and one or two had short jackets, tied in front with a cord, beneath which they wore brightly coloured handkerchiefs. The servant brought them a sop of bread and red pepper and a jug of wine.

"Do you intend to cross the pass?" asked one of the men.

"Yes."

"Well, there must be more than half a yard of snow up there, and you will be found frozen by the roadside."

"Yes, up on the pass it's terrible cold," added another.

"And, besides, there are wolves," said a third.

"But they don't attack persons?" said Marina.

"They don't? Well, all I can say is that in this present month alone they have killed thirty sheep and two or three cows."

"Do they attack the cows too?" asked Don Juan.

"I should think they do indeed. The other day they killed one belonging to Prioste, the shepherd, and left only the bones."

"And that's not all," said another; "there's something still worse, for Melitón, the woodcutter, is in the hills."

"What, again?" they all asked in alarm.

"So I am told. A week ago he entered the village of Quintanarejo and seized everything he could lay hands on."

They all began to speak of Melitón. He had succeeded in inspiring such terror that they scarcely dared say a word

against him. The Mayorazgo and Marina gathered from the conversation that this woodcutter was an accomplished brigand. He had committed several murders, many thefts and had abused peasant-women and shepherdesses.

"Once he was nearly caught in a village near Agreda," said a young muleteer. "He had plundered all the rich inhabitants of the village, and one night he presented himself at the rectory armed with a gun. 'I have come to obtain ten pounds,' he said to the priest. 'I am Melitón.'"

"'It's you, is it?'" said the priest. "Come in."

"He made him enter and sit down at the table. 'Will you have supper?'" he asked.

"'No, I will have ten pounds.'"

"The priest began to walk calmly to and fro in the room.

"'So you won't sup with me?'"

"'No, Señor; what I want is the money.'"

"'Good, I'll give it to you immediately'; and the priest threw himself on Melitón, wrenched the gun out of his hands, and taking aim, shouted: 'Here's your money, take it,' as he fired.

"At the sound of the shot, some of the villagers entered the rectory. The brigand set off running, and as the priest said 'After him: it's Melitón' one or two started in pursuit, but were unable to catch him. Next day they saw that there were bloodstains on the rectory steps."

"The priest must have some spirit."

"I should think so: he took part in the civil war, and

would prefer to be out in the hills with his rifle than saying Mass." The men went on talking of Melitón and his deeds; some of them took his part and considered him a noble fellow; others secretly invoked every misfortune on the brigand's head. The Mayorazgo and Marina were listening to the conversation when a tiny cat jumped up on to the girl's lap. It had only one ear and no tail.

"Poor thing," said the girl, caressing it; "how came it thus?"

"It was a man of Maranchon," answered the servant, who amused himself heating the tongs and burning it.

The Mayorazgo angrily thumped the table with his fist.

"What's the matter?" asked one of the men in the greatest surprise.

"Nothing."

After warming themselves at the fire, the Mayorazgo and Marina, conducted by the servant with a lamp, went to sleep in the loft.

A man who was likewise sleeping there woke up and began to speak to them. He was a muleteer, a young chap with a mule, who sold plums and raisins and dried apples in the villages; the country he visited was that of Burgos and Soria, poor enough, he said. He always started at dawn and, when he had sold his plums and apples, returned to his own village to work in the field. While they spoke, the lamp was taken away, and they fell asleep to the sound of the bells of the cattle in the stable below.

III

Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.

—SHAKESPEARE, *King Lear*.

THE cold dull light of a grey dawn lay on the village when they left the inn. The Mayorazgo went to take leave of the mayor and thank him. The blacksmith was already up, he offered Don Juan a glass of brandy and they had a talk. "When it is a little lighter I will show the girl the way," said the mayor. The sun had not yet begun to shine on the mountain-tops, dense belts of mist covered the village; the church-bell rang to morning prayer, the doors of the houses began to open, the peasants yoked their oxen, and the carts went groaning down the steep paths from the village. Cocks crowed, the blacksmith and his two assistants began their work, and the sound of the hammers fell rhythmically on the anvil. When the mist had lifted a little, the blacksmith pointed to a mountain white with snow and said to Marina: "You see that mountain?"

"Yes."

"Well, yonder lies your way, keeping that mountain always in view." Then the mayor gave the girl a large

hunk of bread and, after wishing them good luck, turned again to his work.

The Mayorazgo and Marina left the village; they went through the snow-covered plain with dark paths marked on the snow, crossed a stream which had flooded a road, and by a deep valley entered a narrow gully.

The sky was low and leaden-hued. The green river flowed over moss-covered rocks and spread out or narrowed between the overhanging banks. Here and there on its banks below, there were sawing factories supported, like ancient lake dwellings, by rows of stakes; and the calm dark water, hiding the river-bed beneath its smooth surface, reflected the red roofs of the factories and the tall pines along its banks. As the day advanced, the sun shone on the pine-covered heights, lighting them into reddish and orange tints. After two or three hours the Mayorazgo and Marina reached the end of the narrow gully below which ran the river, and began the direct ascent of the mountain. Uprooted trees, dry and bare, with many branches, like white cuttlefish, seemed to be trying to scale the mountain's flank, which was covered with a thin growth of whin and withered shrubs. Then they began to come on patches of snow hardened by the great frost, then came a great expanse of white, broken only by the dark masses of the pinewoods. In a clump of pines they lit a fire, rested, and ate part of their bread. "How tired I am," murmured Marina; "yet I never felt so well."

"Happiness is only to be found on the heights," answered the Mayorazgo.

After they had rested a little, Don Juan got up: "Come," he said, "you must not allow yourself to be numbed by the cold." They crossed a summit, and another plain appeared beyond; the undulating white sheet of snow now stretched away in its stainless splendour; a pale sun shone for an instant. They sank into the snow up to their knees; they were hot and tired and their pulses beat violently. The brightness of the snow was blinding; so intense was its glitter that the pale grey of the sky seemed black against it. It began to grow dark; spirals of white cloud passed close to the earth. An east wind blew, and the sky had a stormy copper hue. White mountains appeared grouped together like huge phantoms engaged in unending conference. Every now and then deep abysses opened, huge gullies in whose depths everything lay broken and confused, as though a giant had amused himself breaking up the rocks and stones.

Marina wondered if they could have lost their way, but said nothing; she went on dead tired at the Mayorazgo's side. The day was ending; the wind blew first from one quarter, then from another, now blowing snow fiercely into their faces, now pressing against their backs. "I am worn out," said Marina; "I can go no farther."

"I will carry you," said the Mayorazgo; "you will point out the way."

Don Juan took Marina in his arms and went forward unwavering, without any sign of hesitation or weariness. Marina, nestling like a child with her head on the Mayorazgo's shoulder, gazed at the scenery lit by the uncertain light of the moon, which shone in a blue haze, a strange vague dimness like the glimmer of a dream. Thus they went on hour after hour in the vast desolation of the snows. Sometimes the Mayorazgo would stop, take two or three deep breaths and then go forward again. Suddenly Marina saw a column of thin smoke rising from a hut. "I see some smoke," she said, and leaped from the Mayorazgo's arms. "This way, this way," she said, guiding Don Juan. It was indeed a hut, a small shepherd's hut; they knocked, then, as the door was ajar, they went in, passed through a short passage and came to a small square den about three yards either way, where, crouching by the fire, were an old man with snow-white hair and shaggy beard, wearing a white cape, and a boy of twelve or fourteen, clad in skins.

"God grant us a good night," said the Mayorazgo; "we have lost our way."

"Come in, good people, and warm yourselves," answered the old man.

Marina and the Mayorazgo sat down on piles of branches by the fire.

"A bad journey yours if you come from far," said the old man.

"Yes, we have come far," answered the Mayorazgo.

"You are blind?"

"Yes."

"It was a great misfortune. You must be hungry."

"Yes."

"Come, boy, bring the jug from the window-sill."

The boy opened the shutters and brought out a jug filled with milk.

"It is frozen," he said. He placed the jug by the fire and waited for it to warm. Then the boy brought a handful of chestnuts, and Marina and he roasted them in the ashes of the fire.

"Is the girl your daughter?" asked the old man.

"Yes."

"She is very tall, and you are still a young man. What is your name?"

"Juan."

"I am a herdsman and my name is Lope."

"Are there many wolves in these parts?" asked the Mayorazgo.

"Yes, a great many. Did you not notice near the door a pine-tree with planks nailed to its thickest branches?"

"No."

"Well, on those planks the shepherds leave their provisions to keep them from the ravening wolves."

"Are there then so many?"

"Indeed there are."

The Mayorazgo and Marina devoured the roast chestnuts, drank the warm milk, and went to sleep.

An hour had not passed when the Mayorazgo awoke with a start and heard a door open; Marina also awoke. A strong young man of ferocious mien appeared in the hut; his hair was long, his beard thick and tangled, his eyes fixed on the ground.

He wore a cloak of brown cloth fashioned like a cope, sheepskins were fastened about his legs, and on his feet were leather sandals. A woodman's ax hung from his waist.

"Ho, ho ho!" he cried.

"I'm frightened," exclaimed the boy.

"Is it you, Melitón?" asked the old man trembling.

"It is. I have come to see you, Lope. Don't be frightened. What are you trembling for, boy?" he exclaimed, turning to the child. "From afar I saw that you had visitors. What were you talking about just now?"

"We were talking about the wolves," stammered Lope, "which devour the flocks."

"They do well. All animals do likewise."

"That's true."

"All kill. And how could one live otherwise?" exclaimed the woodman with gloomy vehemence. "I have often heard it said that there is another world where everyone loves everyone else, and nobody does any hurt. I do not believe it and never will."

"Why not?" asked Juan.

"Because I never will. If I do not kill sheep, how could I live? If the woodman did not kill trees, how would they have wood to burn in the village? If the hunter did not kill, who would have meat to eat? Bears and wolves, foxes and birds, men and weasels: all kill; it is the universal law."

"But there may be a higher law," answered the Mayorazgo.

The woodman did not answer; he looked fixedly at the blind man and then at Marina.

"Who is this woman?" he asked.

"It is the daughter of this good man," answered Lope.

"She is beautiful. Come here, girl."

"What do you want with her?" asked the Mayorazgo.

"I am not speaking to you," replied the woodman.
"Come here, girl."

"She will not go," said Don Juan.

"I am Melitón the woodman, who has killed more Christians than a wolf kills sheep."

"Well?"

"I am he who steals and kills; no one speaks of me without dread. Give me that girl."

Melitón drew nearer; the Mayorazgo caught him by the arm with his left arm and with his right gave him a blow so tremendous that the woodman fell to the floor roaring with rage. He got up, took the ax from his waist and bran-

dished it as he went towards the Mayorazgo. Marina stepped between them and the blow failed; again he raised his arm, but the Mayorazgo succeeded in seizing him by the throat and knocked him down. Both of them fell to the ground, Melitón underneath, the Mayorazgo on top; and a terrible struggle ensued. Their backs seemed to crack beneath the strain; the Mayorazgo kept a ferocious hold of the brigand; Melitón roared in frenzy, scratched and bit his adversary in the hand. Whereupon Don Juan knocked him about so unmercifully that Melitón cried out to him to stop. The Mayorazgo allowed him to get up, and the bandit, bruised and shattered, tottered out of the hut. Lope barred the door and gazed at the Mayorazgo in deepest admiration. "Has he injured your hand?" asked Marina.

"It's nothing; a mere scratch. Now go to sleep, my child. You need not fear that he will return." And despite the uproar produced by the recent affray, a few minutes later, worn out with weariness, all slept in the hut.

When Marina and the Mayorazgo awoke next morning, the sun was up; one could not look at the expanse of snow without being dazzled by the light. Lope accompanied the wayfarers to the end of the upland plain from which one looked down into a broad ravine with two lakes in it.

"Go down here," he said, "and in two hours you will arrive at the first village. Do not go near the black lake."

"Why not?"

"You might die."

"But why?"

"Because a woman lives in its depths who kills everyone who goes near. No one who looks into that water may live."

"Good, we will avoid it," answered the Mayorazgo.

"Good-bye and thank you, Señor Lope."

"Good-bye and good luck."

Marina and the Mayorazgo began the descent of the great ravine, deep in snow. Of the two lakes, one was frozen; the other lay black as ink, justifying its mysterious reputation. It looked like the round eye of some monster. From above, one looked into the interior of a funnel, which might have been formerly the crater of a volcano.

"Let us go to the black lake," said the Mayorazgo to Marina.

"Why should we?"

"Let us go there."

They crossed the frozen lake and approached the other. Marina said that its water was very deep and very clear. They went up to its very edge. "Does it show our reflections?" asked the Mayorazgo.

"Yes."

"And we remain unharmed. You see how all these marvels are lies. Let us go on."

They left the lakes behind, went up the other side of the ravine and crossed some snow-covered hills. Soon the snow ceased to appear in continuous mass, and presently they came to isolated pines, and then to large pinewoods. To-

wards the end of the afternoon they hit a bridle-path which skirted a pinewood and a deserted shepherd's hut. Here they halted. Marina piled up some dry wood and lit a fire, which in the clear air burnt like a sacred flame on the altar of a god. They lay down on the ground. Marina gazed at the scene before her: the pinewoods that lay at her feet like black abysses, the moors of heather and whin, and the distant mountains touched here and there with violet hues. When night fell, they slept huddled up in the hut.

IV

We write these words now many miles distant from the spot at which, year after year, we met on that day, a merry and joyous circle. Many of the hearts that throbbed so gaily then have ceased to beat; many of the looks that shone so brightly then have ceased to glow; the hands we grasped have grown cold; the eyes we sought have hid their lustre in the grave; and yet the old house, the room, the merry voices and smiling faces, the jest, the laugh, the most minute and trivial circumstances connected with those happy meetings crowd upon our minds at each recurrence of the season, as if the last assemblage had been but yesterday!

—DICKENS, *Pickwick Papers*.

NEXT day it was snowing. The Mayorazgo and Marina followed the road which passed by the hut, and in two hours came to a group of ten or twelve houses round a common. In what seemed the principal house, two men were standing by the door, and Don Juan asked if in charity they could be given a night's lodging. One of the men told him to go into the kitchen, and they went in and sat down by the fire, in which two great trunks of oak were burning, held up at one end by some small benches. There were many people in the kitchen, and the Mayorazgo learnt that it was the house of the richest herdsman of the village, a young man who had been married a year and whose wife was about to give birth to a child. Her mother-in-law was

there to attend on her, but the husband had sent for the doctor from the next village, and his arrival was awaited with impatience. The mother of his wife, not having the courage to attend on her own daughter, was waiting impatiently; the sister-in-law of the master of the house sat by the fire and minded the pots or went to and fro continually. At mid-day they all had a meal, and continued the conversation; in the next room, which was that of the master of the house, they could hear the groans of the woman, and the attempts of her mother-in-law and husband to soothe her. The doctor presently appeared on horseback, and entered the kitchen, his cape and cap white with snow. As he entered he shook his cloak, unwrapped his scarf and approached the fire to warm his hands.

"Señor doctor," said the husband, "come quickly."

"There is no hurry," murmured the doctor calmly.

He was a little, vigorous old man, with face, ears and neck the colour of copper, and a strong white moustache.

After rubbing his hands together to warm them, he went into the other room and soon afterwards returned, with the husband, who showed signs of the greatest dismay.

"You think, then, Señor Doctor?"

"Yes, yes, it is all right; you need not be afraid."

And he began to stride up and down the kitchen, whistling old tunes of his student days.

"The citizen will take his time," he said, as he sat down by the fire.

The oxen were lowing in the stable; dogs barked in neighbouring houses; the wind whistled in the chimney. From time to time one heard the bells of a flock which a shepherd was bringing down to the shelter of the village.

"What weather," murmured the old man, "to ride along these mountain roads."

"Ha, ha," answered the old grandfather; "and you have no choice, Señor doctor."

"So long as women play these practical jokes," said the doctor bluntly.

They all laughed at this; and the doctor looked at the Mayorazgo and Marina.

"What? have you come far?" he asked them.

"From the country of Navarre."

"On foot?"

"On foot, yes."

"It's bad weather for travelling on foot."

"When one needs must . . ."

"Of course."

The doctor looked at them again attentively.

"Will the snow remain now till the spring?" asked the girl.

"Till April or May, when the flowers come," answered the grandfather.

The doctor got up at the sound of a cry, and with the words "Ah, this is a different matter," entered the bedroom. They heard groans and fierce cries of pain. Marina

listened full of curiosity; then a louder cry, and a shrill wail. The door opened, and the mother-in-law entered carrying a round flat basket and, lying on it in a blanket, the new-born babe. The grandfather, grandmother and shepherds went up to look at it.

"Ho, how big the villain is," said one of them.

"Large as a calf."

Endless comments were made, and when the doctor came he asked: "Where is the citizen?"

"Here he is."

"Let me see him. He is strong, he will be as robust as his father."

"Is it a fine baby?" asked the Mayorazgo.

"Yes, very fine."

"Poor little thing," murmured Don Juan in a low voice. "A sorry gift, this life they have given you!"

"Has your life been so unfortunate, friend?" asked the doctor ironically.

"Yes, pretty bad."

"In what way?"

"It is painful to relate."

"Misfortunes, eh?"

"Yes, great misfortunes."

The doctor once more looked attentively at the Mayorazgo; then he said good-bye, promising to return next day unfailingly, put on his cape, wrapped his scarf round him

and mounted and departed. It was still snowing, the snow-flakes danced in the air.

When night came, a lamp was lit; the burnished hoops of the wooden water-cans gleamed in the light of the fire. After supper the shepherds went away, some to their own houses, others, who were shepherds' servants, went for sacks of straw, and they and the Mayorazgo and Marina lay down, with their feet to the fire. Next day, Christmas Eve, the new-born child was to be baptized. As there was no fish and it was a fast-day, it was agreed that the supper should begin at midnight. Early in the afternoon the preparations commenced, and they were magnificent. On the hearth beneath the chimney, where the largest log was burning, there were great pots, a cauldron and two lambs roasting on large spits which rested on iron tripods. Marina, being an innkeeper's daughter, was skilled in the making of puddings, and undertook this part of the feast. On small tables she kneaded cakes and beat up eggs in large saucepans. Round her hovered a crowd of children watching every movement, in the hope that she would presently give them the saucepan which had contained the rice pudding or the cream, that they might scrape it clean. The grandmother of the new-born child baked the long and round cakes made by Marina, and afterwards they sprinkled them with red pepper, sugar and aniseed. While Marina and the other woman were at work in the kitchen among that swarm

of children, the shepherds kept coming down from the mountains; they folded their flocks and came into the fire. When the night was far advanced, the table was laid in the middle of the kitchen, and as midnight struck they all sat down. The grandfather sat at the head of the table, the Mayorazgo on his right and the master of the house on his left. Marina and the sister-in-law awaited at table. First they brought in the soup, one of bread, another of vermicelli, the greatest luxury of the village. The grandfather said grace and they all began to eat. Then they brought great rolls of meat and the lambs and then the dessert.

They then all got up and took their places round the great chimney. The grandfather threw on armfuls of dry branches, and the flames sprang up. Some of the branches crackled and exploded noisily. One of the goatherds, thumping a tambourine, began to sing slow simple carols; two Basque shepherds, father and son, sang the long melancholy songs of their country. Then the grandfather suggested that they should amuse themselves with riddles; but as the riddles were known to all in the village, they agreed to make the Mayorazgo and Marina guess them, since they were the only persons who could find in them the interest of novelty.

"See if you can make out this one," said the grandfather to Don Juan:

"I toil and moil, go up and down,
And am hanged for my labour's crown;
When I begin, I've nothing on,
But as I work, my clothes I don;
The rope for my hanging I make, and grow stout
Even as I hang and turn about."

They all looked with interest towards the Mayorazgo.
"He won't guess it, he won't guess it," said the goatherds.
"Perhaps it is the spindle," answered the Mayorazgo.
"He has guessed it after all."
"See if you guess this one," said one of the goatherds:

"A little house,
A lovely sight,
No carpenter
Can make aright,
But only God
In His great might."

"A walnut?" asked the Mayorazgo.

They were amazed at his cleverness; and one of the Basques set him another riddle, which he translated from the Basque:

"Four that press upon the earth, and four jugs full, two tall points, two windows and a hyssop."

"The cow."

"Hurrah for the solver of riddles!"

"Why don't you tell us a story?" asked the grandfather.

The Mayorazgo said that he could not remember any, but all the goatherds said that was impossible. Don Juan racked his brains and remembered that his grandmother used to tell them the tale of a giant, and although he could recollect it but imperfectly, began to tell it:

“There was once an extraordinary man whose name was Great-belly. He was as tall as a mountain, and so stout that each of his fingers was larger than the largest oak on the mountainside.”

“Golly, what a size the villain must have been!” said one of the goatherds.

“When he was born his parents brought a cow for him to drink its milk, but Great-belly threw himself upon the cow and devoured it in one mouthful. The parents, seeing their son was so voracious, determined to expose him on the mountainside. They took Great-belly to a distant mountain and left him there.”

At this point the Mayorazgo bethought himself that he might adorn his hero with the labours of Hercules; and he described them one after another. The struggle with the hydra of Lerna and with the Minotaur were received with enthusiasm by his listeners; and not less so the cleverness of the hero when he cleansed the Augean stables by turning the river Alpheus from its course. After the twelve labours he went on with the common story as told by his nurse:

“Great-belly was going to the court of a great King, when

he met a fox on the way. 'Where are you going, Great-belly?' said the fox.

"To court."

"Will you take me with you?"

"All right." And Great-belly went up to the fox and devoured it.

"He quietly went trudging on his way, and presently he met a bull, who, like the fox, said: 'Great-belly, where are you going?'"

"I'm going to court."

"If you would only take me with you!"

"I see no objection." And he swallowed the bull as he had swallowed the fox.

"Not long after, he came on a muleteer who was going with twelve mules to a village.

"Where are you going, Great-belly?"

"To court."

"Oh, how gladly would I go with you!"

"Well, I will take you if you like." He opened his mouth and in went one by one the twelve mules and the muleteer.

"After all this swallowing, Great-belly felt thirsty, and on coming to a river he bent down and drank up the river. Thus replete, he arrived at court and asked permission to see the King. They took him into a garden and as he passed the farm-yard he said: 'Out, fox.' Out came the fox, and speedily destroyed all the hens in the farm-yard. Great-belly entered a room full of chests of golden guineas,

and then into another, and when he came to the store-room he said: 'Out, muleteer.' Out came the muleteer with his twelve mules, which he loaded with sausages, hams and salt beef, and went his way. The servants of the palace now came in and, seeing that the provisions had disappeared, said: 'Great-belly has eaten them.'

"To punish him, the King commanded that he should be shot, and as the giant was so tall, he ordered out all his soldiers so that they might be sure of hitting him.

"They took Great-belly to the town square, and the soldiers took aim.

"'One, two' . . . they were just going to say 'three' when Great-belly said:

"'Out, bull.' Out came the bull and took a soldier and tossed him into the air, and then another and another till not one was left.

"Then the King, seeing that he had to deal with a man so extraordinary, said: 'The only way is to make a pyre of wood, set Great-belly on it, tie him fast and then set fire to the whole.'"

"Now, indeed, the poor man won't escape," cried one of the goatherds.

"Simpleton, why not?"

"He would think of some new device: all these wizards have wiles for any difficult occasion."

"They placed him on the top of the wood, they bound his hands and feet, they tied him to the pyre and set fire to

the wood. A great fire shot up. The people were saying: 'Now he'll be burnt to a certainty,' when Great-belly cried: 'Out, river.' And out came the river and quenched the fire.

"Then the King, seeing that the man was so out of the ordinary, gave him as much gold as he wished, provided he returned to his native place. There Great-belly married a giantess and lived very happily. All hearty and hale, and so ends my tale."

The end of the story was received with great applause.

"Keep up the fun," said the grandmother; and it was nearly dawn before they went to bed.

EPILOGUE

This looks not like a nuptial.

—SHAKESPEARE, *Much Ado about Nothing*.

MANY a day they spent trudging on from village to village, and after going through the greater part of Aragon, entered the country known as the Maestazgo. One afternoon, at dusk, arriving at the top of a hill, Marina saw afar off the coast and the blue belt of the Mediterranean melting into the horizon. The sky then took on tints of red, the dark mountains were veiled in the mist of night, and the blue belt of sea became one with the sky. The country of which she thus had a glimpse was the country of the sun, the land of promise to which they had been so long directing their steps. They dreamed of it that night as they slept at the foot of a tree.

Next morning, by a path edged with brambles and thistles, they descended into a valley of trees with a stream in it. The woods from a distance resembled a brown mist supported on black columns. The trees were still leafless, but some of them were already in bud; green ivy wound round their knotted trunks, and white and yellow mosses gleamed on their bark. A ray of sun pen-

etrated into the wood, troops of birds flew out; among bushes of heather the throstle sang and the thrush whistled; and the sun rose in radiance above the summits of the snow-mountains. The sky changed to a clear and splendid blue; on the flanks of the mountains a few golden flowers shone out among the shrubs of broom.

The stream, swollen by the melted snows, flowed between green reeds. The air was warm and filled with the scent of earth; the grass was sprinkled with the white and yellow buds of daisies. Here and there a butterfly glanced and trembled above the grass; birds and large flies flew swiftly through the blue air.

The Mayorazgo felt sad; Marina too was uneasy in her mind. That awakening of Nature, that breath of life in the air, they found strangely enervating.

"Shall we rest here?" asked Marina.

"If you like, Rosarito."

They lay down on the ground. Suddenly Marina, sitting up, murmured energetically: "I am not Rosarito. I am no longer a child."

The Mayorazgo suppressed an eager sigh.

"Yes, it is true," he murmured sadly.

"What is the matter?" asked she.

"The matter is that I love you and ought not to love you, because I am nothing but a hapless monster."

"No," exclaimed Marina. "I also love you."

“And you are willing to be mine?”

“You are my lord and master,” murmured Marina.

And the blind man and the girl clasped one another in a long embrace.

A NOTE ON THE TYPE IN
WHICH THIS BOOK IS SET

This book is composed on the Linotype in Bodoni, so-called after its designer, Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813) a celebrated Italian scholar and printer. Bodoni planned his type especially for use on the more smoothly finished papers that came into vogue late in the eighteenth century and drew his letters with a mechanical regularity that is readily apparent on comparison with the less formal old style. Other characteristics that will be noted are the square serifs without fillet and the marked contrast between the light and heavy strokes.



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TAMPICO

By *Joseph Hergesheimer*

Author of *Cytherea*, *The Three Black Pennys*,
The Bright Shawl, etc.

Tampico, although it is laid in tropical Mexico, is a story not of the effect of the tropics on a man but of the power of an individual over even the jungle. Govett Bradier makes oil and the sea and the tangled monte serve him—he is one of the great marauding Americans to whom all the gorgeous romantic aspects of a tragic land are no more than practical facts to be conquered and hammered into a practical purpose. He is hard and courageous, and wholly victorious, until overtaken by the passion of love; but not only the sting of the classic arrow changes his fate, he is bitten by the *Anopheles claviger*, and his accomplishments, his triumph, are dissolved by fine doubts which lead him to a destination ironically far from all his determination and planning. This, however, takes him through gay as well as somber and dangerous places; violent death is accomplished by steel-stringed guitars, and little fatal girls wear scarlet camellias in their black hair; and there is present the grim and incurable humor of traditional American character.

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MANNEQUIN

By Fannie Hurst

Author of *Appassionata*

This novel, in serial form, won the \$50,000 prize offered in 1925 by Liberty to the best novel by an American author.

Two tempers flare out—a domestic quarrel. It culminates in an angry parting. Each takes it for granted that their baby daughter is with the other parent. Presently, they are reasonable beings again. But—there is no baby daughter. She is gone. Where?

Twenty years pass. The lawyer is now a judge, and still childless. In a crowded courtroom he sits in judgment on a young woman charged with murder. There they are—the just judge, the girl who has grown like a white flower in the mud of the underworld. And who is to say to either of them that they are father and daughter?

So much is the irreducible nucleus of situation in Miss Hurst's new novel. It suggests two of her admitted qualities, power and ingenuity. Those who have watched the striking recent development of her work do not need to be told that, after all, her greatest claim is the warmth, the intimate subtlety, of her portrayal of persons inherently worth our knowing.

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